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PEARSON M'ADAM MUIR, D.D.

MINISTER OF GLASGOW CATHEDRAL

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PREFACE

These sketches are not offered as a History of English Religious Literature. Every reader will probably wonder why certain writers are included and certain others are omitted. The selection of names has been dictated partly by personal preference and partly by limits of space. But the selection, however arbitrary, will, it is hoped, be found fairly representative of different phases of belief and life which have appeared in successive epochs of English Christianity. It has not been possible to bring the Victorian era within the compass of the volume.

A few of the chapters have already appeared in the form of magazine articles.

5th October 1901.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

CAEDMON—CYNEWULF

670–780 (?)

I. One day about the year 670 there was brought to Hilda, Abbess of the Monastery of Whitby, a herdsman called Caedmon, who gave a singular account of himself. He had hitherto been grieved because of his inability to make verses and to sing them. At entertainments where it was the rule for each guest to sing in turn "for the sake of mirth," he had been obliged with shame to leave the table, conscious of his inability to compose. The night before, having effected his escape and taken refuge in the stable, he had fallen asleep, and a vision had appeared to him, saying, "Caedmon, sing some song to me." "Sing?" he answered in surprise; "because I could not sing I left the banquet." "Nevertheless," said the apparition, "thou shalt sing." "What shall I sing?" incredulously asked Caedmon. "Sing the beginning of created things," was the command, and immediately there fell from his lips ordered words to the praise of God. When he awoke in the morning, he remembered what he had sung in his dream, and came to tell the Abbess, that she might judge of the gift which he had received. She took counsel with learned men, who, to test him further, gave him a passage of Scripture to render into verse, which he brought to them next morning. In consequence of this, the Abbess

commanded that he should be taught the whole course of sacred history, and all that he learned he turned into verse, "and sweetly repeating the same, made his masters in their turn his hearers." "Thus sang he," says the Venerable Bede, "of the creation of the world and the beginning of the race of men and all the history of Genesis; of the Exodus of Israel from Egypt, and the entrance into the Promised Land; of many of the stories of the Holy Scriptures; of the Incarnation of the Lord, His Passion, Resurrection, and Ascension; of the coming of the Holy Ghost, and the teachings of the apostles. Also of the terrors of the future judgment, of the horror of hell-punishment, and the sweetness of the heavenly kingdom, made he many songs; and likewise many others on the mercy and judgment of God; but in all, he strove to draw men away from the love of sin and to incite them to goodness."

The death of Caedmon was in keeping with his simple faith. He had a presentiment of his approaching departure, for, when to others there was no sign of it, he insisted on being taken to a house set apart for the sick and dying. About midnight, having spent the previous hour in joyful converse, he requested that he might receive the Holy Communion. Then asking those around if they were in charity with him, and declaring that he himself was in charity with all the servants of God, he "strengthened himself with the heavenly viaticum"; and learning that the hour was near when the brethren would awake to sing the nocturnal praises of the Lord, he said, "Well, let us wait that hour," and signing himself with the sign of the Cross, he passed away in sleep. "Thus it came to pass," so Bede concludes the story, "that as he had served God with a simple and pure mind, and undisturbed devotion, so he now departed to His presence, leaving the world by a quiet death; and that tongue

which had composed so many holy words in praise of the Creator, uttered its last word whilst he was in the act of signing himself with the Cross and recommending himself into His hands."

Not only in the subject which he chose, but in his manner of treating it, Caedmon has been regarded as a forerunner of Milton. It is doubtful whether Milton had ever heard of Caedmon, yet the coincidence of treatment in certain passages is very remarkable. We are, for example, irresistibly reminded of *Paradise Lost* as we read Caedmon's account of the fall of the rebel angels:—

> The fiend with all his comrades fell
> From heaven, angels, for three nights and days,
> From heaven to hell, where the Lord changed them all
> To devils, because they His deed and word
> Refused to worship.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Their pain
> Was great, then were they fallen to the depth
> Of fire in the hot hell for their loose thought
> And pride unmeasured, sought another land
> That was without light and was full of flame,
> Terror immense of fire.[1]

II. From those old days there has been handed down a poem, *The Vision of the Cross*, which, remarkable in itself, has had an equally remarkable history. There was discovered in the Monastery of Vercelli, in Piedmont, in the year 1832, "an ancient half-ruined skin-book in old South English, containing homilies and poems." Among these was a poem entitled *The Vision of the Cross*. In translating this poem, a well-known old English scholar, Mr. J. M. Kemble, was struck by the resemblance of the lines to some that he knew already. He had previously made a study of the inscription on the famous Runic cross

[1] Professor Morley's translation in *English Writers*, vol. ii.

in the parish of Ruthwell, Dumfriesshire. That wonderful monument had, it was supposed, been in existence between eleven and twelve hundred years. Shifted from place to place, at one time regarded with a half-superstitious veneration, at another knocked down and cast aside as a monument of idolatry, it had remained as a mute witness of the past. Attempts had been made by antiquarians to decipher it, and various interpretations had been given. At last Mr. Kemble made out that it was a portion of a poem, not from heathen but from Christian times, describing the sufferings of the Saviour. He was now delighted to find that the extract was taken from the poem in the Monastery of Vercelli. The monument in Scotland and the manuscript in Italy were closely allied; and after being separated all these centuries, were destined to throw light upon each other. The manuscript showed whence the inscription had been derived; and, in the opinion of at least some competent scholars, the inscription disclosed the authorship of the manuscript. For on the cross there was discovered the sentence: "Caedmon fawed me" (Caedmon made me). This is indeed held by other scholars not to be conclusive evidence of the authorship; the words might have reference to the carver of the letters as well as to the writer of the verses. The point is one for specialists to settle. This is certain, that the poem and the monument are among the most interesting of all the relics that have been preserved from that early period. A few years ago, by the pious care of the minister of Ruthwell, the late Rev. James M'Farlan, the cross was placed in the parish church to shelter it from the ravages of storm and weather which it had defied so long.

As to the poem itself, the Cross on which the Saviour died is supposed to appear in a vision to the writer, and to tell him the story of the Crucifixion. The Cross is

covered with gold and precious stones, though still stained with blood. It tells how it had grown in the woods, how it had been cut down, how it had been set up on Calvary, and had borne its Divine and awful Burden. The language in which our Lord is mentioned, though reverent, is strange to our ears, and bears token of lingering heathen ideas; for it is as a warrior or noble that He is described:—

> For the grapple then girded Him, youthful Hero.
> Lo! the man was God Almighty!
> Strong of heart and steady-minded,
> Stept He on the lofty gallows,
> Fearless, spite that crowd of faces,
> Free and save man's tribes He would there.
> Bevered (trembled) I and shook when the Baron clasped me,
> But dared I not to bow me earthward:
> Fall a field-ward, mote I nowise:
> 'Twas my duty to stand fast!

Then the Cross relates that it was buried in the earth, but that having been honoured to bear the Lord of Glory, it was disinterred by His disciples, and laden with ornaments:—

> God's Bright One whilom
> Suffered on my substance.
> Hence I now so stately
> Rise high under Heaven,
> And can be the Healer
> Of everyone whose ond (soul)
> Is awed before me.

And the Cross instructs the listener to go forth and proclaim its power:—

> Tire not to tellen
> Of the Tree of Glory,
> Where the Prince of Peace
> Tholed His Passion.

The vision having vanished, the poet resolves that he will live obedient to its behests. He has passed through many trials: he is almost alone in the world, but he will live in the hope with which the vision has gladdened him:—

Rent are now from me
My friends the mightiest:
Harbour now in Heaven
With the High Father
In glee and glory.
I, eke, gladly
Long each day
Till the Lord's Cross Tree—
On our earth's platform
Which once I gazed at—
From the calls of this care-world
Shall call and fetch me,
Bringing me yonder
Where bliss ever floweth
To the City Celestial.[1]

The poem indicates a time of spiritual struggle, of transition from heathendom to Christendom. The friends by whom Christ is taken from the Cross and laid in the Sepulchre belong more to Scandinavian legends than to the story of the Evangelists; and Christ Himself is depicted more as a dying Hero than as the Lamb of God. Still it is Christ who is made the central figure; it is He who is held up as the Light and Life of men. It is not in the wood of the Cross that men are called to trust, but in Him who hung thereon, in Him, "the Lord of Benison," who hath "gained His old Home-Halls." The Cross fades from the eye of the seer and the Crucified alone is seen.

III. Some of the authorities who dispute that *The Vision of the Cross* was written by Caedmon, attribute it

[1] Professor George Stephen's translation in *The Ruthwell Cross, and Caedmon's Complete Cross-Lay.*

to Cynewulf, about whom personally little is known, but who seems to have lived rather later than Cædmon, and to have also been a Northumbrian. He was only a wandering gleeman, but he enjoyed the favour of princes, and the evidences of learning which he shows have led to the conclusion that he must have been educated in a monastery school. The way in which, in one of his undoubted poems, Cynewulf regards the apostles, is very like the way in which our Lord is regarded in *The Vision of the Cross*. They are described as heroes going forth to war :—

> Twelve heroes famous far beneath the stars,
> Servants of God : their strength did yield not
> When they hewed in battle on helmet-crest ;
> Since they had placed themselves as God,
> Even the high King of Heaven, had set the lot.

Cynewulf wrote poetical lives of several saints—Juliana, Guthlac, Andreas, Helena ; but his greatest work was one entitled *Christ*, describing the Three-fold Coming of our Lord : His Birth, His Ascension, and his Advent at the Last Judgment. "Never," says Ten Brink, "has the love of Christ in contrast with the guilt of sinners been depicted more impressively, more touchingly than here : the terrors of the Last Judgment have rarely been portrayed with a more vivid pencil. Of all the old English poems, Cynewulf's *Christ* is perhaps that which reveals in the most complete and effective manner the spirit of Christianity and of Christian Latin poetry."

"Christ, Saviour"—thus is our Lord invoked to come and end the woes of earth—

> Christ, Saviour, by Thy coming bless this earth of ours with love ;
> The golden gates, so long fast barred, do Thou, O heavenly King,
> Bid now unclose, that humbly Thou, descending from above,
> Seek us on earth, for we have need of blessing Thou canst bring.[1]

[1] Professor Morley, *English Writers*.

Whatever ignorance, whatever superstition may have mingled with the belief of these old writers, it is pleasant to recognise that we are essentially at one with them, that the faith in which they lived is the faith which we assert to be our noblest heritage. Opinions and ceremonies vary from age to age, but He for whose glory they have been devised is the same, yesterday, and to-day and for ever.

CHAPTER II

THE VENERABLE BEDE—ALFRED THE GREAT

673–901

I. Of the writers of those early days there is none whose name is more familiar to us than the name of Baeda, or the Venerable Bede. He was called Venerable not on account of his years, for he was only sixty-two or sixty-three when he died. There are various legends of the way in which the designation came to be applied to him. The most popular is that the sculptor who was carving the inscription on Bede's tombstone had cut out the words, "Here lie the bones of ——," and, not knowing by what adjective to describe the saint, had paused and fallen asleep. When he awoke, the word "Venerable" had been added, doubtless by the hand of an angel. From whatever cause the name came to be assigned to him, there is certainly no one whose memory is cherished more reverently and affectionately. Very little can be told of his personal history. His was a perfectly uneventful life. He was devoted to the duties of his sacred calling and to study. Yet, dwelling within monastery walls, it is to him that our knowledge of the

world of Great Britain before his day is mainly due. Spending his time in laboriously tracing the record of the lives of others, he has enshrined himself in the hearts of his countrymen.

He was born in the year 673. At the age of seven, he was, like another Samuel, placed under the care of the saintly Benedict Biscop, who had lately built a monastery at Wearmouth, a building remarkable as being the first in which glass was used in the island. Bede's life henceforth was spent either in this monastery or in one which was soon afterwards built at Jarrow, about ten miles distant. "Spending all my life," such is the simple description which he gives of himself, "in that monastery, I wholly applied myself to the study of the Scriptures, and amidst the observance of regular discipline, and the daily care of singing in the Church, I always delighted in learning, and teaching, and writing. In my nineteenth year I was ordained deacon; in my thirtieth I received the priesthood. From the time that I was ordained priest up to the fifty-ninth year of my age, I made it my business, for the use of me and mine, to compile commentaries upon the sacred Scriptures." Praying, studying, and writing, he passed his peaceful and blameless days. When we recall the disadvantages under which he laboured, the few books to which he could have had access, and the difficulty of communication with other places, the amount of work which he achieved is amazing. He was, he tells us, his own secretary; he made his own notes; he was his own librarian. Yet he left behind him a collection of writings which embraced "nearly all branches of the learning of that time"; and in all departments treated by him Bede became an authority, often consulted down to the later middle ages, and not in his own country alone. His exhaustive commentaries upon various books of the Scripture, as

well as his homilies, were used countless times by later theologians. His writings on natural science formed, for a long time, a mine for those authors to whom the way to older sources was unknown or too arduous. He occupied himself also with grammar, rhetoric, and metre. His most valuable works, however, are those pertaining to chronology and history—his *Lives of Saints and Martyrs* and his *Ecclesiastical History of England*. It is this last work which remains his enduring monument. In simplicity, in transparent honesty, in patient investigation it stands unrivalled for the time at which it was written. Dr. Stopford Brooke calls him "our first critical historian": but he was hardly "critical" in the sense of the twentieth century. He accepts legends and stories which a modern historian would not have admitted, but these have a charm of their own; they help us to understand the period better than a more unromantic chronicle would have done, and they endear the narrator to us. "I humbly entreat the reader," he says, "that if he shall, in this that we have written, find anything not delivered according to the truth, he will not impute the same to me, who, as the true rule of history requires, have laboured sincerely to commit to writing such things as I could gather, from common report, for the instruction of posterity. Moreover, I beseech all men who shall hear or read this history of our nation, that for my manifold infirmities, both of mind and body, they will offer up frequent supplications to the Throne of Grace. And I further pray, that in recompense for the labour wherewith I have recorded, in the several countries and cities, those events which were most worthy of note and most grateful to the ears of their inhabitants, I may, for my reward, have the benefit of their pious prayers."

It is in these pages that we have the detailed account of the mission of St. Augustine of Canterbury, the

conversion of the Northumbrians by the preaching of Paulinus, the labours of St. Aidan, the Council of Whitby, the story of Caedmon. "First among English scholars, first among English theologians, first among English historians, it is in the monk of Jarrow that English literature first strikes its roots."[1]

But nothing in Bede's writings exceeds in beauty and pathos the story which his disciple Cuthbert gives of Bede's own death: "that pure and touching story which, like a solemn evening landscape, seen from the hill-top of a long life of faithful work, breathes so quietly the gentle and clear air of death."[2] It would seem that the uninterrupted studies of Bede had affected his health, so that he "drew his breath with pains and sighs." For a short time before his death, although his breathing still troubled him, he did not suffer pain. "And thus," says Cuthbert, "he passed his life, cheerful and rejoicing, every hour giving thanks to Almighty God. Daily he read lessons to us his disciples, and whatever remained of the day he spent in singing psalms; he also passed all the night awake in joy and thanksgiving, unless a short sleep prevented it, in which case he no sooner awoke than he presently repeated his wonted exercises, and ceased not to give thanks to God with uplifted hands. I declare with truth that I have never seen with my eyes, nor heard with my ears, any man so earnest in giving thanks to the living God. O truly happy man! He chanted the sentence of Holy Scripture, 'It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God,' admonishing us to think of our last hour, and to shake off the sleep of the soul; and being learned in our poetry he sang to us verses in the English tongue:—

[1] J. R. Green, *Short History*, p. 38.
[2] S. A. Brooke, *Early English Literature*, ii. 146.

As to the journey Each must take
No one is prudent More than he should be,
In considering Ere he goes hence,
What to his spirit, Of good or of evil,
After the death-day Doomed may be.

He also sang, 'O glorious King, Lord of all power, who, triumphing this day, didst ascend above all the heavens; leave us not desolate, but send down upon us the Spirit of Truth which was promised to us by the Father.' And when he came to the words 'leave us not desolate,' he burst into tears. He often repeated 'God scourgeth every son whom He receiveth,' as also this sentence from St. Ambrose, 'I have not lived so as to be ashamed to live among you, nor do I fear to die, because we have a gracious God.'" During those weeks he laboured at the translation of the Gospel of St. John, and made extracts from the Book of Notes of Bishop Isidore. There came a day when one said to him, "Dear Master, there is still one chapter wanting. Do you think it troublesome to be asked any more questions?" He answered, "It is no trouble; take your pen and make ready, and write fast." In the afternoon he distributed among the brethren the little trifles which formed his worldly possessions. They wept because they would see his face no more, but rejoiced in the assurance that he was about to be with Christ. By and by his scribe said to him, "Dear Master, there is yet one sentence not written;" and he answered, "Write quickly." Soon after, the scribe said, "It is written," and Bede replied, "Yes, it is finished. Take my head between your hands and raise me, for fain would I sit with my face to the holy place where I was wont to pray." "And thus, on the pavement of his little cell, singing 'Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost,' he breathed his last, and so departed to the heavenly kingdom."

Sublime recluse!
The recreant soul that dares to shun the debt
Imposed on human kind, must first forget
Thy diligence, thy unrelaxing use
Of a long life, and in the hour of death
The last dear service of thy passing breath.[1]

II. The *Ecclesiastical History* of Bede was written in Latin. It was afterwards translated into English by one whose name is rightly held in equal honour, the good and great King Alfred. In popular estimation Alfred stands high as a hero and a patriot. The story of his resistance to the Danish invaders is familiar to everybody, embellished as it is with such incidents as his allowing the cakes to burn which a poor woman, in whose cottage he was in disguise taking refuge, had set him to watch. That he cared for his people, and devised many things for their welfare, is also widely known; but the interest which he took in education, both secular and religious, is not so widely known as it ought to be. Nor did he merely encourage learning in others, but he himself provided treatises for the use of his subjects—mainly translations, indeed, but sometimes by turn of phrase and by interpolation of sentences and opinions, he so stamped his own character upon the treatises that they came to be almost original works. His achievements are the more remarkable that his early education was defective, and that he was past middle age before he learned to read Latin. He was exceedingly anxious that the clergy should be men of education and good life; he therefore translated the *Pastoral Rule* of thee great Pope Gregory, by whose instrumentality England was converted to Christianity. In his preface the king laments that learning had fallen into decay. "So general," he says, "was its decay in England, that there

[1] Wordsworth, *Ecclesiastical Sonnets.*

were very few on this side the Humber who could understand their rituals in English, or translate a letter from Latin into English; and I believe that there were not many beyond the Humber. There were so few of them that I cannot remember a single one south of the Thames when I came to the throne. . . . When I considered all this, I wondered extremely that the good and wise men which were formerly all over England, and had perfectly learned all the books, did not wish to translate them into their own language. But, again, I soon answered myself, and said, 'They did not think that men would ever be so careless, and that learning would so decay; through that desire they abstained from it, and they wished that the wisdom in this land might increase with our knowledge of languages. . . .' When I remembered how the knowledge of Latin had decayed, I began to translate into English the *Shepherd's Book*, sometimes word by word, and sometimes according to the sense. And I will send a copy to every bishopric in my kingdom, and on each there is a clasp worthy fifty mancus (300 shillings). And I command in God's name that no man take the clasp from the book, or the book from the minister; it is uncertain how long there may be such learned bishops as now, thanks be to God, there are nearly everywhere. Therefore I wish them always to remain in their place, unless the bishop wish to take them with him, or they be lent out anywhere, or any one can make a copy from them."

Another work which he translated was the *Consolations of Philosophy*, written by Boethius, "the Last of the Romans," who had, under a false accusation of conspiracy against Theodoric, king of Italy, been thrown into prison and sentenced to death. Boethius seeks to console himself by philosophical reflections. Boethius was not a Christian, but his work, which Gibbon terms

"a golden volume, not unworthy of the leisure of Plato or Tully," had in the course of three centuries attained to such repute throughout the Church, that it was commonly regarded as the production of a believer, and Alfred probably translated it under this impression, as a kind of devotional manual. "We can imagine," a foreign critic has said, "with what feelings, in the even ing of his eventful life, the manly heart of the great Saxon king absorbed those teachings of antiquity on the worthlessness of earthly happiness, or the supreme good, or the wise man's duty of composure in the struggle of life, and how he felt impelled to reveal this treasure to his people."[1]

In one part of this translation, Alfred expands a sentence so happily that we get a glimpse of the definite purpose by which his noble life was guided. "These are a king's materials and his tools to reign with: that he have his land well-peopled; he must have prayer-men and soldiers, and workmen. . . . These also are the materials which he must have beside these tools: provisions for the three classes, land to inhabit, and gifts, and weapons, and meat, and ale, and clothes, and whatever is needful for the three classes. Therefore I was desirous of materials wherewith to exercise the power, that my talents and power should not be forgotten and concealed. . . . I wished to live honourably whilst I lived, and after my life to leave to the men who were after me my memory in good works."

His wish has been abundantly fulfilled. Whether in defeat or in triumph, in hiding as a fugitive, or securely seated on the throne, he "lived honourably," and to those who came after him he left a memory without reproach. He died in the year 901, at the comparatively early age

[1] Ten Brink, *Early English Literature*, trans. by H. M. Kennedy, p. 78.

of fifty-two. A great part of his life was spent in throwing off the yoke of the Danes and in consolidating his kingdom, and he was the victim of constant illness and suffering; but his courage, his perseverance, his faith overcame all obstacles. "One hardly knows," Mr. Freeman has said, "any other character in all history so perfect; there is so much that is good in so many different ways; and though no doubt Alfred had his faults like other people, yet he clearly had none, at any rate, in the greater part of his life, which took away at all seriously from his general goodness." The survey of his career suggests that picture of an ideal king which was drawn by "the sweet Psalmist of Israel"; and the picture, it may without irreverence be said, bears more resemblance to Alfred than to David. "He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. And he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; when the tender grass springeth out of the earth, by clear shining after rain."

CHAPTER III

WILLIAM LANGLAND

1332–1400

The second half of the fourteenth century was at the same time one of the most glorious and one of the most disastrous periods in the history of England. It was a period of victory abroad and of discontent at home. Edward III., Edward the Black Prince, Richard II., Crecy, Poictiers, Halidon Hill, Neville's Cross, Wat Tyler, the Lollards, the Black Death,—these are names and events which suggest the most

varied associations of glory and of calamity. Under Edward III., Mr. Freeman tells us, "England was successful in battles, but she was thoroughly beaten in war." There were brilliant episodes, but the result was not lasting. The kings of France and of Scotland might both be prisoners; but neither the people of France nor the people of Scotland were subdued, and England was to find them as dangerous and as troublesome neighbours as ever. The glitter of arms in the field could not long divert the peasantry from their own misery and distress. The momentary overthrow of her hereditary rivals, of France and of Scotland, could not make up to England for the growing alienation of her own children. In the very hour of the most magnificent achievements, it might have seemed as if from internal dissension, from the ravages of pestilence, from the corruption of the clergy, from the revival of learning, from the resistance to Papal encroachment, from rising unbelief in dogmas and traditions formerly accepted without inquiry, the whole fabric of society was tottering to its fall. But if the apparent prosperity contained within it the elements of dissolution, the apparent dissolution contained within it the elements of new prosperity. Not ruin, but freedom and stability in the State; not the destruction, but the reformation of the Church is what we see emerging from the disorganisation and confusion of the times.

The voice of complaint regarding the state of things in the England of the fourteenth century came, it has been said, from three quarters—the Court, the University, and the People: the voice of the Court finding expression in Geoffrey Chaucer, the voice of the University in John Wycliffe, the voice of the People in William Langland.[1] Chaucer can hardly be ranked among the distinctively

[1] Dean Milman.

Religious Writers of England, although in his writings religious utterances not infrequently occur.

It is, however, not of Chaucer, but of Langland and of Wycliffe that we think as representing the religious literature of the time; and in this place it is only of Langland and of Wycliffe that we need speak. The supposed particulars of Langland's life that we possess are gathered mainly from his poem, and may be condensed into a few lines. He was born at Cleobury Mortimer, Shropshire, about the year 1332. He was of humble origin, but he received a good education at the monastery school of Great Malvern. He did not content himself with the subjects which were taught at school, but eagerly read whatever came in his way; it was in this desultory reading that he found delight and inspiration. He was, according to his own description, "lief to learn, but loath for to studie." His ambition was rather to know a little of many things than to know one thing thoroughly—

> Alle the sciences under sonne and alle the sotyle craftes
> I wolde I knew and couth kyndely [1] in myne herte.

He had some acquaintance with theology, logic, law, natural history, astronomy, but it was in works of imagination that he chiefly revelled. He followed "wit" rather than "study," although it was to study that he dedicated himself, and although he described a life of study as the nearest approach to heaven that earth could give—

> For if hevene be on this erthe and ese to any sonle
> It is in cloistere or in scole, be many skilles I fynde
> For in cloistere cometh no man to chide ne to fighte
> But alle in buxomnesse there and bokes to rede and to lerne.

It was not, however, in the cloister that he was to

[1] Knew intimately.

spend his days. He took minor orders, and wore the clerical tonsure; but, as he became a married man, he could not be a regular priest. With his heart roaming among the hills of Malvern, he had to fix his abode in London. He lived at Cornhill with his wife and daughter. He appears to have been as happy in his home as his poverty and a sense of the social injustices of the time would permit him to be. He gained a scanty livelihood by singing psalms for the repose of the souls of the departed, and by writing wills and letters for the living. In personal appearance he was tall and gaunt, and in disposition he was proud and moody. He chafed at the drudgery to which he was set; he so habitually passed his superiors in rank without the slightest sign of deference that they found an excuse for his sullenness in the supposition that he was a fool. There were times when his soul was filled not only with bitterness towards man, but with doubts of the providence of God. His happiest life was found in his dreams; in them he escaped from the miseries of his own lot and of the world around him. He wrote his *Vision of Piers the Plowman* when he was a young man; he continued revising, enlarging, improving it all his days. When or where or how he died we have no certain knowledge, but there is some probability in the conjecture that he went back to his beloved Malvern, and that, like his greater contemporary, Chaucer, he closed his career with the closing century.

Three distinct versions of Langland's great poem appeared during his lifetime—the first in 1362, the second in 1377, and the third in 1390. The second is a much enlarged edition of the first, containing additional characters and incidents; the third differs from the second mainly by the more lavish use of comments and reflections. With the distinction between the versions

we need not here trouble ourselves. It is the religious import rather than the literary form of the poem with which we are concerned.

No work of the fourteenth century gives so vivid a picture of the English life of the period. In poetic genius, in grace of expression, in lightness of touch, Langland cannot be compared to Chaucer, but it is to Langland rather than to Chaucer, to "the field full of folk" rather than to the Pilgrims at the Tabard Inn, that we must look if we would learn the political, social, and religious ideas which were seething in the hearts of the people. In Chaucer it is the brighter aspects of the scene that are painted; in Langland the more gloomy. All masks and coverings are torn aside, and the underlying reality of misery is exposed to view. If Langland cannot be placed upon a level with Chaucer, still less can he be placed upon a level with Dante; yet there is more in common between Langland and Dante than between Langland and Chaucer. "Put him as far from Dante as you will," says M. Jusserand, "he is the only poet of the age whose mystic Epopee deserves to be named after that of the illustrious Florentine."[1] There is one art in which the same appreciative critic thinks that Langland has never been surpassed, the art of giving to a crowd a character as distinct as the character which any poet has ever succeeded in giving to an individual.

The poem opens with a vision of "the field full of folk." The motley company was composed of all sorts and conditions of men; some toiling at the plough, some strutting in gay clothing, some fulfilling vows and penances, some engaged in buying and selling; minstrels, hermits, friars, pilgrims, beggars, bishops, kings. The whole poem is, in a sense, a review of that "field full of

[1] *L'Épopée Mystique de William Langland*, p. 3.

folk," and of the relations in which the "folk" stand to one another. The corruptions prevalent in Church and State are assailed with transparent sincerity, with grim satire, with overmastering indignation. Lazy monks, covetous priests, had no reverence at his hand. The Cardinals to whom St. Peter had entrusted the power of binding and loosing were not the Cardinals of the Papal Court, but the Cardinal Virtues. The only availing "pardon" or "indulgence" which Truth bestowed was written in the two lines—

> Qui bona egerunt, ibunt in vitam eternam :
> Qui vero mala, in ignem eternum.

Langland could see no justice in the decree that if a man were only in the boat of the Church on the wild sea of the world, he might stumble and fall as often as he pleased, and yet be safe and sound; while outside the boat the best and noblest were doomed to everlasting destruction. He has hopes that all will

> Turne into the trewe feithe and intil one byleve,

for Christ has called all to Himself — Saracens, Schismatics, and Jews.

Langland was a man of the people; he was moved with compassion for their misery, and with bitter resentment for their wrongs; he exalted the power of the Commons; he paid small reverence to men merely on account of their high degree; he acknowledged the divine right of kings only in so far as they ruled according to reason, justice, and truth. But he was marvellously restrained; he saw the dangers of anarchy and revolution; for the sake of the people, as well as for his own sake, he counselled wisdom and patience. That reform was necessary he felt keenly, and he found relief in depicting the character of one by whom the reform might be

wrought. It is from this ideal character, "Piers the Plowman," that the whole poem takes its name. Piers is not introduced till the fifth "passus" or canto, and this is the manner of his introduction. A number of penitents are seeking for truth, but no man can tell them where to go. A palmer, who has returned from the Holy Sepulchre, is greatly astonished at the question. He had never in all his travels met with any one who sought for truth. Then Piers the Plowman steps forward and abruptly says—

> I knowe hym as kyndely [1] as clerke doth his bokes,
> I haue ben his folwar al this fifty wyntre,
> I dyke [2] and I delue,[3] I do that treuthe hoteth.[4]

The selection of such a man as the guide and deliverer of the nation was doubtless made in accordance with the saying, "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty." Piers the Plowman was a type of the uprightness and the wisdom that were to be found among the unsophisticated people, and in obedience to which the people would find deliverance from the evils under which they groaned. As Langland continued to touch and retouch his poem, the character of Piers the Plowman underwent a singular transformation. Langland was probably learning that a more radical change than could be effected by legislation was required, that an improvement of outward conditions might not destroy corruption, whether national or ecclesiastical or individual. Hence he thought less in later days of a new Leader who was to arise than of Him whom of old the common people heard gladly. More especially in those additions to the poem which were entitled "Do-well," "Do-better," and

[1] Intimately. [2] Ditch. [3] Dig. [4] Commands.

"Do-best," Piers the Plowman and Christ become virtually identified. "Do-better" describes the Death and Resurrection of our Lord, and the dreamer awakes in joy to the sound of Easter bells. In "Do-best," Christ, in the garb of Piers the Plowman, appears as Love.

> Piers the Plowman was painted all bloody,
> And came in with a cross before the common people,
> And right like in all limbs to our Lord Jesu.

It is in the triumph of Love that the solution of the social problem will be found.

> "Counsel me, Kynde,[1]" quod I, "what crafte is best to lerne?"
> "Lerne to loue," quod Kynde, "and leue[2] of all othre."

The poem concludes in sorrow, but not in sorrow without hope. The Church is still militant; the reign of Antichrist is not ended; the Better Land is not here. But Conscience is roused to seize his staff, and to set forth upon a pilgrimage which he will not cease "till he have Piers the Plowman," till, in other words, the appearing of "the Christ that is to be." The conclusion of the poem with the dreamer awaking in tears has seemed to some so unsatisfactory that they cannot imagine it to be the conclusion intended by the author; but, as Mr. Skeat replies, "what other ending can there be? or, rather, the end is not yet. We may be defeated, yet not cast down; we may be dying and yet live. We are all still pilgrims upon earth. *That* is the truth which the author's mighty genius would impress upon us in his parting words. Just as the poet awakes in ecstasy at the end of the poem of 'Do-best,' where he dreams of that which has been already accomplished, so here he wakes in tears at the thought of how much remains to be done. So far from ending carelessly, he

[1] Nature. [2] Leave.

seems to me to have ceased speaking at the right moment, and to have managed a very difficult matter with consummate skill."

But neither at the beginning nor at the end of his poem is it the "skill" of Langland, however "consummate" it may be, which we are constrained to admire, so much as his absolute honesty, his overwhelming earnestness. If his "genius" was "mighty," his ethical and religious power was mightier still. It was for the supremacy of truth and righteousness that he contended. The allegory may be tedious and confused, but the moral is enforced with perfect plainness throughout. The doctrines of the Church, the order of the State, he does not assail in themselves. He had no quarrel with the Sacrifice of the Mass, the worship of the Virgin Mary, or even with the authority of the Pope. He had no thought of combating theological errors, of countenancing "new doctrines"; but so uncompromising was the vigour with which he denounced the prevalent ecclesiastical unreality and corruption that the Reformers of a later day were justified in claiming him as their own, and a hundred and fifty years after his death the first printed edition of his work was issued in defence and promotion of the principles of the Reformation.

CHAPTER IV

JOHN WYCLIFFE

1325–1384

Foremost among Reformers before the Reformation stands the name of John Wycliffe. There were others indeed who, during his lifetime, and before his lifetime, were

soldiers in the same cause of enlightenment and freedom; but the part which he took was so prominent, and the influence which he exerted was so widespread, that, without disparagement to them, he may be fitly called *the* Reformer before the Reformation. Dean Milman, as we have mentioned, said that the voice of complaint regarding the state of things in the English Church and nation of the fourteenth century came from three quarters —the Court, the University, and the People: the voice of the Court finding expression in Chaucer, the voice of the University in Wycliffe, and the voice of the People in William Langland. This is so far true, but it does not adequately represent the power of Wycliffe. It would be equally true to say that the voice of the Court, the voice of the University, and the voice of the People all found expression in him. He was in a good sense a Court favourite; he was "the pride of Oxford"; and if he was not the idol of the people, he had their respect. The tales of Chaucer and the visions of Langland would have made comparatively little impression on the moral and religious sentiments of the nation without the treatises and translations of Wycliffe. "To him," it has been asserted by Professor Montagu Burrows, "more than to any one person who can be mentioned, we owe our English language, our English Bible, and our Reformed Religion." "English literature," says Ten Brink, "owes an incalculable debt to the reformer. He gave to it, indeed, no single work of art, but he gave new ideas, and a multitude of stimulating influences. Wycliffe's literary importance lies in the fact that he extended the domain of English prose, and enhanced its powers of expression. He accustomed it to terse reasoning, and perfected it as an instrument for expressing vigorous logical thought and argument; he brought it into the service of great ideas and questions of the day,

and made it the medium of polemics and satire. And, above all, he raised it to the dignity of the national language of the Bible."

John Wycliffe was born in Yorkshire about the year 1320, but of his early life almost nothing is known. He is supposed to have gone to Oxford in the year 1340, and in one capacity or another, as learner or as teacher, he was associated with it almost to the end. Oxford has been remarkable for its "movements." But the greatest "Oxford movement" of all is that which is identified with the name of Wycliffe. The Oxford of his time was marvellously different from that with which we are familiar. "In the stead of long fronts of venerable colleges, of stately walls beneath immemorial elms, history plunges us into the mean and filthy lanes of a mediæval town. Thousands of boys, huddled in bare lodging-houses, clustered round teachers as poor as themselves, in church-porch and house-porch, drinking, quarrelling, dicing, begging at the corners of the streets, take the place of the brightly-coloured train of doctors and heads."[1] But this squalid town, with its enormous concourse of students, of all ages and all ranks, the scene of rioting and revelling which no modern town and gown riot could rival, was yet the centre of influence. The proverb said, "When Oxford draws knife all England's at strife," and fortunately this was true in a good as well as in a bad sense. When a man with a message to deliver arose, he found at Oxford ardent listeners, and the truth which he promulgated was soon carried through the length and breadth of the land. The full course of study in those days for one who would be a Doctor of Theology extended over seventeen years. Through this long course Wycliffe appears to have gone. His erudition was immense. A bitter enemy bears witness that

[1] J. R. Green, *Short History.*

"he was the most eminent Doctor of Theology who lived in that age. In philosophy he was held second to none, in scholastic learning altogether incomparable. It was his highest ambition to go beyond the intellects of other men by the subtlety of his knowledge and the depth of his genius, and to dissent from their opinions." More than all, he was a student of the Holy Scriptures, which he read in the Vulgate. And so, learning and teaching, he was appointed to one charge after another, being unquestionably Master of Balliol, and probably Warden of Canterbury Hall, receiving, after he took orders, the living of Fylingham in Lincolnshire, which he afterwards exchanged for Ludgershall, nearer Oxford; and finally he became Rector of Lutterworth.

> Not least art thou, thou little Bethlehem
> In Judah, for in thee the Lord was born;
> Nor thou in Britain, little Lutterworth,
> Least, for in thee the Word was born again.[1]

The first literary work which brought Wycliffe into prominence was his defence of the Crown against the encroachments of the Pope. It was the renewal of an old struggle. More than a century before Wycliffe was born there had been contention for supremacy between the Pope and King John.

> Thou canst not, cardinal, devise a name,

such, according to Shakespeare, had been John's bold defiance of the papal legate, Cardinal Pandulph—

> Thou canst not, cardinal, devise a name
> So slight, unworthy and ridiculous,
> To charge me to an answer, as the pope.
> Tell him this tale; and from the mouth of England
> Add thus much more,—that no Italian priest
> Shall tithe or toll in our dominions.

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[1] Tennyson, "Sir John Oldcastle, Lord Cobham."

These brave words in the mouth of John only rendered him more contemptible when he ere long humbly laid aside his crown in order to receive it again as a favour at the hands of the papal legate. The tribute which John was compelled to promise continued to be paid by his successors for a century, but at last there came an interval of thirty-three years, in which it had fallen into abeyance, and it was supposed to be utterly obsolete, when in 1365 Pope Urban suddenly renewed his claim, and threatened, in case of refusal, to summon Edward III. before him. This assumption of authority at once roused the spirit of the warlike king. The empty bravado of the Shakespearian John was to be the actual achievement of the historical Edward, and in his resistance he was supported by the country at large. The pride and honour of the nation had been wounded, and they would not submit to the exaction. It had become the custom for the Pope to appoint nominees of his own to the wealthier livings of the Church, men who, as a rule, were not over-strict in their lives, were foreign to the habits of the people, and did not even know their language. All things combined to stir up the spirit of patriotism, to make the people intensely loyal to the Crown. The claim of the Pope was referred to the Parliament and immediately rejected. An anonymous monk wrote a treatise in support of the papal claim, and Wycliffe was requested to answer it. This he did in a manner both bold and courteous, as at once a lover of his country and a lover of the Church. He put some of his strongest arguments into the mouths of certain barons who were understood to have uttered them in Parliament. "Our ancestors," said one, "gained this realm by the sword: let the Pope come and take it by the sword." "The Pope," said a second, "should follow the example of Him who had not where to lay His head." "The Pope,"

said a third, "calls himself the servant of the servants of the Most High. His only claim to tribute from this realm is for some service done. What is his service to this realm? Drawing away money to enrich himself and his court." And so one after another of the lords is represented as expressing himself contemptuously hostile to the papal claims. Wycliffe protested that he was a humble and obedient son of the Roman Church, but he indicated beyond the possibility of mistake that in the frank opinions of the barons he thoroughly shared.

In order to review, and if possible to remedy, the abuses which had crept into the Church, it was agreed in 1373 that a conference should be held in Bruges between the envoys of the Pope and of the English king. Wycliffe was one of the English envoys, and the manner in which he acquitted himself gained for him the friendship of the king's son, John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster. The result of the embassy was indeed slight; any concessions granted on the part of the Pope were immaterial. It was in consequence of the services rendered at this conference, however, that Wycliffe was eventually presented to the living of Lutterworth, where he spent the rest of his life.

The feud between him and the Pope waxed hotter. He was cited to appear before Convocation at St. Paul's in February 1377. He obeyed the summons, but attended by powerful friends, John of Gaunt and Lord Percy, Earl Marshal of England. The meeting was speedily in confusion, John of Gaunt and the Bishop of London indulging in furious recrimination. As the Duke was not a match for the Bishop in railing, he betook himself to vowing that he would bring down the pride of all the prelates in England, and to threatening personal violence against the Bishop on the spot. The people rose in defence of the Bishop and rescued him from the

wrath of the Duke. But Wycliffe was allowed to go free for the time.

Then the Pope himself sought to silence him, issuing Bulls to the King, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the University of Oxford, enjoining them to exercise their authority over this man, by whose "detestable madness" so many were being led to error and perdition. But this attempt was as ineffectual as the former, and for much the same reason. When after considerable delay he was summoned to Lambeth, and had presented a paper defending himself, all further procedure was interrupted by the appearance of an officer of the household of the Princess of Wales, requiring the Council to forbear, and not to presume to pronounce anything in the form of a sentence "against the said John." The people also who had previously sided against Wycliffe's friend, John of Gaunt, now stood up for Wycliffe against the representatives of the Pope. "The Bishops," an angry chronicler writes, "were seized with such terror at the sight of that knight from the Court of the Princess, that we would have supposed they had no horns on their mitres more." Thus Wycliffe again departed, to attack with undiminished vigour the corruptions which he wished to remove.

Hitherto his conflict with Rome had been on practical grounds. He had assailed avarice, extortion, immorality, and negligence. With theology he had not meddled; but this also he was now to do. The doctrine of transubstantiation was the doctrine which he most vehemently attacked as contrary to reason and Scripture. His views were promptly condemned by an assembly of doctors of theology and law at Oxford. Suspension, major excommunication, and imprisonment were denounced against all by whom the "heresy" should be upheld. Many who had supported Wycliffe in his practical reforms could not follow him in his repudiation

of the dogmas of the Church, and even John of Gaunt warned him not to discuss these difficult questions. But Wycliffe only the more diligently employed his pen in vindication of his views. The most popular of his treatises was "The Wycket"—"a verye brefe diffinition of these wordes, *Hoc est corpus meum*." The title of "The Wycket" was probably given to the treatise by the Lollards, from the opening sentences in which the necessity of entering into life by the strait gate is emphasised. "Therefore praye we hertely to God that He of His mere mercye wyll so strengthen us wyth the grace and stedfastness of His Holy Spirite, to make us stronge in spirituall lyvinge after the Evangelicall gospell, so that the worlde, no not the very infidells, papistes, and apostates can gather none occasion to speak evyil of us, whereby we maye entre into that strayte gate, as Christ our Saviour and all that folowes Hym have done."

When Pope Gregory XI. died he was succeeded by Urban VI., who proved himself so rigorous in enforcing discipline that a number of the Cardinals left Rome, and elected a rival Pope in the person of Robert of Cambray, Count of Geneva, who was styled Clement VII. Wycliffe took the side of Urban, but the schism undermined much of his faith in the infallibility and unity of the Church of Rome. "Now," he said, "is Antichrist divided, and one part fights against the other." The Popes had too much on hand in settling their rival claims to think of meddling with Wycliffe, and they troubled him no more.

His great enemies were now the Mendicant Friars. This order, originally so noble in its intention, had woefully fallen, and Wycliffe thought no language too strong to apply to it. Once, when he was ill, a number of friars visited him in the hope of inducing him to recant, but his only reply was to raise himself in bed, and cry out, "I shall not die, but live, and declare the evil deeds

of the friars." He was not content with simply denouncing them; he would counteract them by restoring, if possible, the ideal which they had forgotten. He sent forth a number of young men, all, or nearly all, in orders, to preach the Law of Christ, and they made a remarkable impression throughout the country. "In long, dark-brown garments of coarse wool, barefooted, and staff in hand, these new apostles went about from place to place. Stared at by the multitude, scoffed at and maligned by ill-wishers, they preached the Gospel wherever they found a willing ear—in church or in chapel, on the market-place or in the street. . . . The discourse of the 'Poor Priests' was dignified, unadorned, sober, and severely practical. . . . Short and concise in its arguments, the discourse was made to tell by its illustrations from every-day life, but never by coarse or farcical analogies."[1] The impression which the preachers made was due partly to their simplicity and earnestness, partly to the satire with which, at times, they assailed the friars, the prelates, and the Pope himself, partly to their constant appeals to the Bible, which had so long been virtually a sealed book to the people.

The great work of Wycliffe's life was the translation of the Holy Scriptures. Although many portions had been translated previously, the sacred volume had never, as a whole, been rendered into English. The effect of this work cannot be over-estimated. Though, in itself, not destined to be the translation in permanent use, it prepared the way for others. The right of all to possess and read the Bible was established. "All secular men," so Wycliffe argued in different parts of his writings, "ought to know the faith: so it is to be taught them in whatever language is best known to them." "Christian

[1] Ten Brink, *English Literature*, ii. 16 (trans. by W. C. Robinson, Ph.D.).

men and women, old and young, should study first in the New Testament, should cleave to the study of it; and no simple man of wit, no man of small knowledge, should be afraid to study immeasurably in the sacred text."

A bitter opponent of Wycliffe's work complained: "The Gospel which Christ delivered to the clergy and doctors of the Church that they might themselves sweetly administer to the laity and to the weaker persons with the hunger of their minds . . . did this Master John Wycliffe translate out of Latin into English. . . . And in this way the Gospel pearl is cast abroad and trodden under foot of swine, and that which used to be precious to both clergy and laity is rendered, as it were, the common jest of both. What was hitherto the principal talent of the clergy and doctors of the Church is made for ever common to the laity." This, which is stated to the reformer's disparagement, ranks among his main claims to our gratitude and admiration. The gigantic work was executed in a few years. The translation of the whole of the New Testament was the work of Wycliffe himself. In the translation of the Old Testament he had the assistance of others.

One more assault was made upon him. His old enemy Courtenay, Bishop of London, became Archbishop of Canterbury, and called an assembly of divines to examine the tenets of Wycliffe. This assembly is known as the Earthquake Synod, on account of a slight earthquake which took place during its sittings, and which Courtenay and Wycliffe each interpreted as an indication of heavenly wrath, the one against heresy, the other against oppression. By this Synod Wycliffe's tenets were condemned, and instructions were issued to the Bishop and to the University of Oxford to forbid such teaching under pain of excommunication. At Oxford,

with few exceptions, if not with only one exception, the followers of Wycliffe recanted. Strange to say, Wycliffe himself remained unmolested, and although his voice was heard no more in Oxford, he did not cease to preach and to write. It was probably felt that any attack on him would lead to a conflict with the Parliament, to which Wycliffe appealed for protection. It was on the last Sunday of 1384 that, during the celebration of mass, though he himself was not officiating, Wycliffe was stricken with paralysis, and on the last day of the year his spirit passed away. His death at such a time was hailed by his enemies as an evident judgment.

Thirty years afterwards the Council of Constance, indignant that his doctrine had poisoned all Bohemia, declared him a notorious heretic and excommunicate, and ordained that his bones, if they could be distinguished from those of the faithful, should be dug up and cast at a distance from the sepulchre. This mandate was not put in force till thirteen years later still, in 1428, when, in presence of the Primate, the Bishop of Lincoln, and many ecclesiastics, the remains of Wycliffe were exhumed and burnt, and the ashes conveyed into the little river which flowed by. "Thus," in the familiar words of Fuller, "the brook hath conveyed his ashes into Avon, Avon into Severn, Severn into the narrow seas, they into the main ocean. And thus the ashes of Wycliffe are the emblem of his doctrine, which now is dispersed all the world over."

The insinuation may still sometimes be heard that Wycliffe, in his attempts at reformation, was actuated by personal pique and selfish interest. There could hardly be a greater calumny. We may not agree with all his opinions; we may not approve of all his actions. The tenets which he proclaimed could easily be carried to excess; and ere long the irrational zeal of so-called

disciples brought reproach upon his name. He was often identified with the peasants who would have burst the bonds of all law, and with the more fanatical Lollards who, whatever virtues distinguished them, would in consistency have put an end to all ecclesiastical order. But Wycliffe himself was as remarkable for his moderation as for his ardour, and, so far as actions are a test of character, there could not be a more single-minded and disinterested man. The manner in which his convictions were formed and expressed was most natural and consistent. He pursued the even tenor of his way, whether king and court and university and people were on his side, or whether he was standing almost alone. He lived for the welfare of his country. He may, in the estimation of some, be associated with John of Gaunt, and, in the estimation of others, with Wat Tyler; but he was neither a supple courtier nor a rash revolutionist. He might see his friends recant, he might hear the peasants in their wrath declare that his bitter enemies, the mendicant friars, alone among the clergy should be spared, but he swerved not to the right hand nor to the left. Groaning over many evils, praying and struggling that they might be removed, he acted with a calmness marvellous in those days in which the pestilences, earthquakes, and floods of the outward world seemed emblems of "the stormy state of men's unsettled minds." He was a type of those who, revolting from corruption and error in the Church, yet dread the evils of separation, and would reform her from within, would bring her back to primitive simplicity and purity, or would introduce such modifications as may best fit her for the present need. He might have taken as his own the words long afterwards used by John Wesley, "I vary from the Church . . . but I will never leave it." Had he been driven out, he could not have helped him-

self. He would none the less have spoken to such as would listen, and he would have proclaimed himself to be none the less a true son of the Church Catholic. But, as a matter of fact, he was not called to undergo this trial; he continued to minister in the Church of which the Bishop of Rome was still the acknowledged visible head, and he died at her very altar. There are those who, for very different reasons, think it a blessing that Wycliffe did not see the fruit of his labours in his lifetime; those who think that, had he succeeded, there would have been less chance of introducing sundry rites and ceremonies; and those who think that, had he succeeded, the Reformation would have been very incomplete. May we not rather think that, had he been listened to, much future evil would have been averted; there would have been a revival of religious life and devotion to the law of Christ, and the spectacle of the Church rent asunder would not sadden us to-day?

CHAPTER V

JOHN LYDGATE—REGINALD PEACOCK

1375–1461 (?)

1. The fifteenth century was not rich in religious literature. Many works were published, and some of them may still be read by the curious, but, on the whole, fewer works that are still useful for the strengthening of faith and of the spiritual life remain to us from that period than from almost any other. It was the period before the Reformation; there was much corruption prevailing throughout the Church; thinking on religious subjects was discouraged by the authorities, and

definitely religious works were, generally speaking, merely echoes of what had gone before. It might almost seem as if the revolution which had seemed imminent, and which, as a matter of fact, was near at hand, had been averted, so little does the literature of this period bear traces of that spiritual tendency which was manifest in Wycliffe, and by and by would be manifest in the tremendous convulsion of the Reformation. Not that the age was wholly without genuine spiritual guides, without men who saw the signs of the times and sought to provide for its needs. The reformed doctrine was working its way in secret, was prized as precious treasure by those who meditated on the teaching of the Scriptures, who prayed and studied rather than published. There were those who led devout lives but who had not become imbued with the reformed doctrines, who adhered to the belief of their childhood, and viewed with distrust and hatred the encroachment of opinions which they considered deadly. And there were those who sought to mediate between contending parties, who opposed the doctrines which the reforming school had proclaimed, but who were keenly alive to the many faults which might be found with the Church in its existing state, and endeavoured in the interests of the Church itself to introduce those improvements which were needful for its preservation. It is an exaggeration to suppose that there was no real piety, no genuine belief in what they professed, among the clergy of that day. Things were bad enough—so bad that it is superfluous and foolish to exaggerate them. There were devout and godly men who, according to the light which they had, tried to make Christ known, and to lead others by love rather than by fear to serve Him in sincerity. The picture which Chaucer, in the very end of the fourteenth century, drew of a good parson, and which was drawn, we may be

sure, in a considerable degree from life, remains one of the most beautiful ideals of the pastoral character :—

> A good man was there of religion,
> And was a poor parson of a town :
> But rich he was of holy thought and work.
> He was also a learned man, a clerk
> That Christ's gospel gladly would preach,
> His parishioners devoutly would he teach.
> Benign he was and wondrous diligent
> And in adversity full patient . . .
> Wide was his parish and houses far asunder,
> But he nor left for rain nor thunder,
> In sickness nor in mischief to visite
> The farthest in his parish, much and lite,
> Upon his feet, and in his hand a staff.
> This noble ensample unto his sheep he gave
> That first he wrought and after that he taught.

To this moral ideal, even amid the superstitious and erroneous theories which had gained currency in the Church, there were not a few striving to attain—in monasteries or in parishes seeking to work out their own salvation, occupying themselves with the duties laid upon them by their superiors, and shrinking from no hardship and toil, consecrating themselves for the welfare of their flocks or of the Church at large. Mostly men whose names are unrecorded, who did their work neither aspiring after fame nor finding it, but some also who expressed in writing their devotional moods or their religious counsels. Among the writers of his time an honourable place must be assigned to John Lydgate, the monk of Bury. He may not stand absolutely high among our poets, but in the generation which succeeded Chaucer no man probably stood higher than Lydgate. He wrote a prodigious quantity of verse, but to call him, as Ritson has done, "a voluminous, prosaic, and drivelling monk," exceeds the limits of fair criticism. He

appears to have been thoroughly honest, to have written out of a full heart. Sometimes he hits off, if with no brilliant flashes of genius, yet with observant and satirical fidelity, the vices and follies of the age. At other times he dwells at great length on the vicissitudes of Fortune. The "falls" of princes and eminent men, the strange reverses by which those in splendour had been plunged into misery, those in glory had been covered with shame, those in strength had been reduced to weakness, those in glowing health had passed to death, formed a theme to which with melancholy fascination he continually recurred. In a poem entitled his *Testament* he gives a hint of various phases through which he had passed in his career. He recalls with a tender remorsefulness a careless though not vicious boyhood, his indolence, his frivolity. He recalls with deeper sorrow that, even after he had donned the garb of religion, his heart had not been true to his work—"the cowl had not made the monk"—and he had trembled on the verge of a life of dissipation wholly inconsistent with his profession. But one day on a cloister wall he saw a crucifix, beside which was written, "Behold My meekness, child, and leave thy pride"; and these words sank into his mind, came to him as a reproach for the past and an impulse for the future. Henceforward, in simple earnest, the love of Christ constrained him, the voice of the Crucified constantly addressed him :—

Tarry no longer, toward thy heritage
  Haste on thy way and be of right good cheer :
Go each day onward on thy pilgrimage,
  Think how short time thou shalt abide here.
Thy place is built above the starres clear,
  None earthly palace wrought so stately wise.
Come on, my friend, my brother most entire
  For thee I offered My Blood in sacrifice.

The poem which perhaps shows him at his best is entitled "Thank God for All." The authorship of the poem has sometimes been disputed; on the whole the balance of evidence is largely in Lydgate's favour. The poet begins by saying that, in a time of sore grief, his eye caught sight of an inscription on a wall—

> A blissful word that on I read,
> That always said, Thank God for all.

And this blissful word, he finds, applies to him in all chances and changes. In joy and sorrow, in prosperity and adversity, he sees that there is room for thankfulness.

> Though thou be both blind and lame,
> Or any sickness be on thee set,
> Think thou right well it is no shame,
> The grace of God it hath thee gret (greeted).
>
> What diverse sonde that God thee send
> Here or in any other place
> Take it with good intent:
> The sooner God will send His grace.
> Though thy body be brought full base
> Let not thy heart adown fall,
> But think that God is where He was,
> And always thank God for all.

Dr. George MacDonald remarks that if there is not much poetry in these verses, there is much truth and wisdom. He thinks, however, that in one or two of the lines there is poetry, as well as truth; above all, that there is "the finest poetry" in the line, "But think that God is where He was." Certainly to check murmuring and faithless fear, a thought more sublime, in language more simple, could not be imagined.

II. Another writer worthy of remembrance is Reginald Peacock. He belonged to the school of those who, clinging tenaciously to what they have been taught,

would yet act fairly towards those who call it in question, and would seek as far as possible to remove any just cause of complaint which may be urged against the existing order of things. There is a homely Scottish proverb, "The redder gets the warst straik in the fray," *i.e.* he who attempts to interpose between two angry combatants in the hope of making peace, very often gets struck by both parties. The proverb was never more fully exemplified than in the case of Reginald Peacock. He was a man of high character, of much learning. He had, after filling various charges of importance, been made Bishop of St. Asaph's in 1444; but while he had thus risen to eminence as a supporter of the Church as it stood, he was not unmindful of the doubts which, uttered or unexpressed, existed in many minds. The teaching of the Lollards had not been without effect; he knew that even where it was not visible it might be growing silently. He was wise enough to understand that the scattering of Wycliffe's bones or the burning of Sir John Oldcastle, however it might stifle the expression of opinion, could not be held as its refutation, or prevent it from being secretly cherished. He himself held that some of the views of the Lollards were wrong, that many of the charges which they brought against the bishops and clergy were groundless, but he came to the conclusion that such erroneous views and charges could be better met by reason than by force. In all generosity and simplicity he determined to do what in him lay to disabuse the minds of the Lollards of what he considered errors, and to defend the action which the Church had taken. It was in 1449 that he published a long work, *The Repressor of Overmuch Blaming of the Clergy*. In 1450 he became Bishop of Chichester, and in 1456 he issued a *Treatise on Faith* with the object of still further meeting and confuting the objections of the

Lollards. His efforts were fruitless. Naturally enough the Lollards did not accept his opinions, but strange to say the greatest animosity which he stirred up came from the clergy. His generous attempts at reconciliation were regarded as acts of treachery. Instead of being hailed as one of the wisest and most convincing champions of the clergy, he was attacked as one of their bitterest detractors. He was accused of undermining the Faith; of treating the Bible, the Fathers, the Church, with irreverence and profanity; of playing into the hands of the Church's enemies. At a Council in Westminster, lords and barons refused to sit unless the Bishop of Chichester were expelled. The clergy demanded that his books should be examined, and eventually the Archbishop of Canterbury pronounced judgment: "Dear brother, Master Reginald, since all heretics are blinded by the light of their own understandings, and will not own the perverse obstinacy of their own conclusions, we shall not dispute with you in many words (for we see that you abound more in talk than in reasoning), but briefly show you that you have manifestly presumed to contravene the sayings of the more authentic doctors." The Archbishop, who, by his own account, had such a low opinion of "talk" as contrasted with "reasoning," concluded his sentence with what he possibly considered "reasoning" of the most forcible and unanswerable description—the choice of recanting these errors, or of being handed over to the secular arm "as the food of fire and fuel for the burning." "Choose one of these two," said the remarkable lover of reasoning, "for the alternative is immediate in the coercion of heretics."

As Peacock had insisted in his works on the authority of the Church, we cannot blame him for renouncing the opinions which his superiors condemned. He was brought to St. Paul's Cross, and there, in the presence of 20,000

people, he made public recantation of his errors, and his books were burnt by the executioner. This, however, did not suffice. He was deprived of his bishopric, and was sentenced to imprisonment; "to have no books to look on, but only a breviary, a mass-book, a legend, and a Bible; to have nothing to write with, no stuff to write upon, no one to speak to him without leave, and in the presence of the abbot, unless the king or the archbishop send to the abbey any man with writing especially in that behalf." Such was the reward of an enlightened man, honestly seeking to ward off evils from the Church. Devoted to its doctrines, he was called a heretic; devoted to its supremacy, he was called a traitor. There have been many greater figures than Reginald Peacock in the annals of English Church History, but there are few more interesting, because he is an example so startling and so glaring of the injustice with which violent partisans so often treat the wiser, more moderate, and in reality more powerful advocates of the cause which they maintain.

The Repressor of Overmuch Blaming of the Clergy was the first great theological work produced in English. Peacock wielded, as he believed, against the Lollards, that weapon of the English tongue which had been wielded with such effect by Wycliffe and his followers. Although ostensibly on the opposite side from Wycliffe, yet the openness of his mind and the treatment which he received from the dominant party incline us to view him as in reality a follower. His moderation, his fairness, his learning also render him not unworthy of the honour which has been claimed for him of being in a sense the forerunner of Richard Hooker.

It needs hardly to be added that the condemning of Peacock's work did not destroy his influence. It destroyed, indeed, that salutary element which might have benefited the organisation of the Church, which might have brought

improvement and amelioration instead of upheaval and overthrow. But when he and men like him were silenced, room was left for the simply destructive elements to work, and in the events of years not far distant may be seen the folly and condemnation of his accusers.

The year that he was deprived, a magnificent edition of the Psalter was printed on the Continent, and soon the views which he had so mildly advocated were spread far and wide.

CHAPTER VI

FISHER—MORE—TYNDALE—LATIMER

1459–1555

I. We have glanced at the lives and writings of men by whom the approach of the Reformation was heralded, who endeavoured to improve the condition of the Church, who sought without any violent change to make it fulfil its Divine mission in the world. We have seen the desire for reformation growing; we have seen it expressed more vehemently in some, more moderately in others. Still the Church as a whole remained unbroken in its organisation; the two parties remained within the same enclosure. But the time had come when this was no longer possible, when they could no more remain together, when the authority of the Pope should be disowned, and the Church should be reformed.

We are accustomed to hear of the martyrs on the Protestant side in the great struggle, and right it is that we should hear of them, that we should hold their names in continual honour; to them we owe incalculable blessings; but none the less we do well to remind ourselves that on the other side there were martyrs too, that among the opponents of the Reformation there were men

of high purpose, men who adhered to their principles at the cost of their lives. Among the distinguished men who did not cast in their lot with the Reformers, and who suffered in consequence, were John Fisher and Sir Thomas More.

John Fisher was born in 1459. His life for long was uneventful in its steady flow of prosperity. He did not become a priest till he was between forty and fifty years of age. His learning was great. He was chaplain to the Countess of Richmond, the mother of Henry VII., and used his influence with her to found two colleges at Cambridge, St. John's and Christ's. He was afterwards made Bishop of Rochester, and Chancellor to the University of Cambridge. He continued for a time in the favour of Henry VIII., who said that never had he met with a man who compared in knowledge and virtue with the Bishop of Rochester. Fisher had no sympathy with the so-called new views. He was severe towards the professors of them, though his natural disposition was gentle. He once took part in a strange performance, when certain heretics were led round a fire blazing in St. Paul's Cathedral, each man casting a faggot on the fire as he passed, declaring that his heresies deserved that he himself should suffer the same fate. Then Fisher threw into the flames the New Testaments and other religious works which the heretics had been guilty of circulating, and the accused, more happy than many others, escaped with an admonition and the appalling foretaste of death.

We would fain believe that a bloodless sacrifice of this kind was more congenial to the Bishop of Rochester than the actual burning at the stake which was supposed to be the rightful lot of heretics. In any case, he was exposed to the hazard of his own life, and he was not found wanting. When Henry VIII., who had been termed

Defender of the Faith on account of his zeal for the Papacy, quarrelled with the Pope and with all who would not consent to his divorcing Catherine of Arragon and marrying Anne Boleyn, Bishop Fisher could not approve his conduct and incurred his enmity. He was thrown into the Tower, and when, as a mark of approval, the Pope bestowed upon him, contrary to his wish, the rank of Cardinal, dangerous as he full well knew it to be, the king barbarously declared, "The Pope may send him a hat, but he will have no head to wear it," and caused him to be beheaded on the 22nd June 1535.

It was not till twenty-five years after his death that a treatise which he had written in Latin was translated into English, and published: *A Godlie Treatise declaring the benefits, fruits, and great commodities of Prayer, and also the true Use thereof.* The text of the treatise was the saying of our Lord, "Men ought always to pray"; and a sample of its teaching may be found in sentences like these:—

Forasmuch as there is no man that by actual prayer (as we call it) doth satisfy and fulfil the same words of our Saviour, that is to say, every moment to continue in prayer, therefore we had need to search out some other sense and meaning thereof. And indeed this saying of our Saviour Christ may be otherwise understanded. As thus: A certain monk, one of the old fathers, being demanded how he fulfilled that commandment of Christ, "Men ought always to pray," made this answer: "When I have," sayeth he, "finished and said my daily prayers, the time that remaineth I use to bestow in labouring with my hands, as far forth as the ability and strength of my body doth permit: whereby it cometh to pass that daily I gain somewhat, with the which I may relieve not only myself, but also some other poor people. And they pray for me as oft as by the unquietness and trouble of my body I cannot pray for myself." And by this means he did believe that he satisfied the commandment. And he had the Holy Scripture agreeable with this opinion, which sayeth, Hide thy alms in the bosom of the poor, and that shall pray for thee.

During his imprisonment in the Tower he wrote a very touching "Spiritual Consolation" to his sister Elizabeth, in which he pours forth penitent lamentations over past forgetfulness and present unreadiness, and pleads with her to watch and pray as her hour may come as unexpectedly as his, in the midst of health and strength. It is strangely pathetic and sombre; the element of hope is lacking, and its chief merit lies in its overwhelming sincerity.

II. The same year in which Bishop Fisher was executed, 1535, was also the year in which, for similar reasons, the great Sir Thomas More fell a victim to the anger of the king. His name is usually associated in our minds with his most famous work, *Utopia*. "In it he painteth the pattern and platform of a most perfect common weal, making it to be one of the new-found lands. The invention was so wittily contrived that they thought there had been such a country indeed; and of their fervent zeal wished that some Divines might be sent thither to instruct them in the faith of Christ." This book was originally written in Latin, and cannot be regarded as distinctively religious, though its tone is reverent throughout. It also advocates a very wide religious toleration, but even Sir Thomas More found it easier to show tolerant sentiments prevailing in his imaginary country of Utopia than to show tolerance in the actual country of England. He was a strenuous opponent of the "new" views, and wrote vehement controversial works. From his earliest days he seems to have been devoutly and studiously inclined, and he manifested his learning and his devotion to the end. He rose early for prayer; the Psalms were his delight; and he not infrequently spent solitary hours in devout meditation. He was liberal in almsgiving, charitable in judgment, mild in temper. In one instance his amiability will probably be regarded as excessive. "He fell to

marrying, and took to wife the daughter of one Mr. Colt, a gentleman of Essex, who had three daughters, very virtuous and well-liking. And albeit his mind served him most to settle his affection on the second sister, for that he thought her fairest and best-favoured, yet when he considered it would be a grief to the eldest to see her younger sister preferred before her, he then, of a certain pity, framed his fancy towards the eldest." His biographer gives him apparently merited praise for his simplicity and uncorruptness. "Sir Thomas More spent most of his life in worldly honours and high offices, where much wealth might be had. Yet he was found without spot, not coveting after gold. The office of Chancellorship, being the greatest office in the realm, he was very unwilling to take it upon him." But the successor of Wolsey in that high office he was compelled to be. He was acquainted with the new learning as well as with the old; he had made the acquaintance of Erasmus, and might have been expected to show more of the tolerance of that great scholar. It has been said that during his Chancellorship no man was put to death for heresy; but whether this be so or no, he did not shrink from harsh sentences which he thought might check the progress of the "new doctrine." "To be troublesome to Heretics, he counted it a praise."

True to his convictions, he would not approve the conduct of the king in divorcing Catherine of Arragon; and when Henry called himself Head of the Church instead of the Pope, Sir Thomas More did not conceal his opposition, and according to the custom of the time he soon found himself an inmate of the Tower of London. The story of his last days, with their mingled pathos and humour, is well known. After his condemnation it was communicated to him that, as a special instance of the royal clemency, he was to suffer death on the scaffold.

"God forbid," he answered, "that the king should show any more such mercy unto any of my friends: and God bless all my posterity from such pardons." To those who had, in their genuine compassion, sought to save him, by inducing him to reconsider his statements— "My Lords," he said, "More I have not to say but that, like as the blessed apostle St. Paul was present and consented to the death of St. Stephen, and kept the clothes of them that stoned him, and yet be they both twain compeers and holy saints in heaven, and shall continue there friends together for ever, so I verily trust, and shall therefore right heartily pray, though your Lordships have now here on earth been my judges to my condemnation, we may yet hereafter in heaven all merrily meet together to our everlasting salvation: and thus I desire Almighty God to preserve and defend the king's majesty and to send him good counsel!"

At the foot of the scaffold, "See me safe up," he said to Sir W. Kingston; "for my coming down, I shall shift for myself." And on the scaffold itself he moved aside his beard, so that it should not be severed by the headsman's stroke. "Pity that should be cut," he said, "that has not committed treason."

"Something of his calmness may have been due to his natural temperament; something to an unaffected weariness of a world which in his eyes was plunging into the ruin of the latter days. But those fair hues of sunny cheerfulness caught their colour from the simplicity of his faith; and never was there a Christian's victory over death more grandly evidenced than in that last scene lighted with its lambent humour."[1]

Neither the controversial nor the purely religious books of Sir Thomas More are now easy of access. Yet

[1] Froude.

one or two of them in their day were read with avidity, and men found strength and nourishment in them. Of one of them, *Comfort in Tribulation*, which he wrote in the Tower, his biographer says: "It is a work rather of an angel than of a man, for he was destitute of all books and human helps when he wrote it: he was close prisoner, and had neither ink nor pen for the most part, but only a coal. Although his pen was blunt and dull, and but a black coal, yet he had another coal that inflamed his heart, such as touched and purified the lips of Esay; and by the help of this sacred coal, that counsel which he gave to others in his books, he practised himself in patient suffering the loss of his lands, goods, and life too, for the defence of justice."

III. And now, turning to the opposite camp, let us glance at More's great adversary, William Tyndale, "a man," as Froude puts it, "whose history is lost in his work, and whose epitaph is the Reformation." Early imbibing the reformed doctrines, he resolved that the New Testament in English should be placed in the hands of his countrymen; that the Scriptures should be better known by the boy at the plough than by the priest at the altar. He could not carry out the object of his life in England, and it was partly at Cologne and partly at Worms that his great work, the New Testament in English, first saw the light. He also published a book entitled the *Parable of the Wicked Mammon*, in which he upheld the doctrine of Justification by Faith, and to which Sir Thomas More replied in a treatise entitled *The Wicked Book of Mammon*.

Tyndale had been lodging for a year at Antwerp, in the house of an Englishman, when there came another Englishman, Henry Phillips by name, who sought to gain the confidence of Tyndale, and on whose poverty Tyndale took compassion. But this man most basely

and ungratefully delivered up Tyndale to the authorities. He was taken to the Castle of Vilvorde, 18 miles from Antwerp. There he remained for some months, when he was tried and sentenced to be strangled and then burnt. At the stake he cried with a fervent zeal and a loud voice, "Lord, open the king of England's eyes." And his prayer, it has been urged, was answered in the fact that next year the reading of the Scriptures in the English language was authorised by the decree of the king.

Doubtless this translation was the great work of Tyndale's life, that by which he exercised his widest influence, that which will preserve his name. "Of the translation itself," in Froude's words, "though since that time it has been many times revised and altered, we may say that it is substantially the Bible with which we are all familiar. The peculiar genius, if such a word may be permitted, which breathes through it, the mingled tenderness and majesty, the Saxon simplicity, the preternatural grandeur, unequalled, unapproached in the attempted improvements of modern scholars, all are here, and bear the impress of the mind of one man, William Tyndale."

Of his original works, the *Obedience of a Christian Man* is that which has been most generally read. It opens with a plea for the reading of the Scriptures in English, and argues that the persecution to which men are exposed for attempting to read the Bible rather proves the righteousness of their cause. It treats of the different kinds of obedience due to rulers, parents, masters, landlords, ecclesiastical authorities; it denies the claim of sundry ordinances to be called Sacraments; and it closes with insisting that the literal meaning of Scripture is its true meaning.

"Remember that Christ is the end of all things. He

only is our resting-place, and He is our peace. . . . As pertaining to good deeds, do the best thou canst, and desire God to give strength to do better daily. But in Christ put thy trust, and in the pardon and promises that God hath made thee for His sake: and on that rock build thine house and there dwell. For there only shalt thou be sure from all storms and tempests, and from all wily assaults of our wicked spirits which study with all falsehead to undermine us. And the God of all mercy give thee grace so to do, unto whom be glory for ever. Amen."

His solution of the social question of his time will be read with special interest. "Let Christian landlords be content with their rent and old customs, not raising the rent or fines, and bringing up new customs to oppress their tenants: neither letting two or three tenantries to one man. Let them not take in their commons, neither make parks nor pastures of whole parishes, for God gave the earth to man to inhabit, and not unto sheep and wild deer. Be as fathers unto your tenants: yea, be unto them as Christ was unto us, and show unto them all love and kindness."

IV. Of the leaders of the Reformation, though some might be greater, none has been more beloved than Hugh Latimer. His honesty, his homeliness, his courage, his faith, have gained him a place in the heart of his countrymen which renders him still a familiar figure. At first he was, in his own phrase, "an obstinate papist," but conference and meditation led him to receive the light which was breaking upon the Church, and he was not slow to assail in his pungent style the errors which he had abjured. It was his practical work, his readiness to speak and help, that endeared him to the people of his day. He knew his own limitations and avoided abstruse subjects in his sermons. "I am wont to wade

no farther into the stream, than that I may either go over, or else return back again, having ever respect, not to the ostentation of my little wit, but to the edification of them that hear me, as far forth as I can, neither passing mine own, nor yet their capacity." As to his preaching, there is probably no better example of its force than his assault upon the slothful ministers of the Church. "Who is the most diligentest bishop and prelate in all England that passeth all the rest in doing his office? I can tell, for I know him well. And will you know who it is? I will tell you: it is the devil. He is the most diligent preacher of all others. He is never out of his diocese, he is never from his cure: ye shall never find him unoccupied: call for him when you will, he is ever at home: he is ever at his plough: no lording or loitering can hinder him. You shall never find him idle, I warrant you."

It is not surprising that when, after a course of years, the Roman Catholic religion was restored under Queen Mary, Latimer should be made a victim. He died, as we all know, martyred by fire at Oxford, along with Nicolas Ridley, saying to his fellow-sufferer at the stake, "Be of good comfort, Master Ridley, and play the man: we shall this day light such a candle by God's grace in England as I trust shall never be put out."

It remains for us to whom that light has come to keep it burning; to see to it that in the highest and noblest sense we live as children of light and of the day. But while we thank God for the work of men like Latimer and Tyndale, and rejoice in the inheritance which they have bequeathed to us, we will not insult the memory of those who, like Fisher and Sir Thomas More, could not see their way to accept the new phase of truth which was dawning, and our great hope and comfort lies in recalling with Sir Thomas More himself

that, like as St. Paul was present at the death of the martyr Stephen, and yet they now are both saints in heaven, so those of later date who were most hopelessly divided are now one again in Him whom by different means they sought to serve.

CHAPTER VII

RICHARD HOOKER

1553–1600

The Reformers had gained the day and come into power, but they were not at peace amongst themselves. Disputes arose as to whether certain modes of worship and of government must be abolished or might be lawfully retained. In the reign of Queen Elizabeth various compromises were adopted in the hope of establishing peace. It was sought, by standing fast on some points, and by yielding others, to conciliate the advocates both of the old and of the new. As was to be expected, the most vehement partisans were to be found on the side of those who wished to make a clean sweep of everything that had been identified with the worship of the Church of Rome. Not a few of the clergy were opposed to the use of any distinctive clerical vestments in the services of the Church, and it was only by a narrow majority that, on one occasion, the continued use of these vestments was allowed. The knowledge that such a controversy raged helps us to appreciate the marvellous beauty and majestic calm of a great work which endeavoured to state clearly the case of the Church of England as reformed, and to show that not in fanatical views on the one side or the other was true wisdom

to be found. The great work is the *Ecclesiastical Polity* of Richard Hooker. Hooker's Life, as told by Isaak Walton, is one of the most charming in the language. He appears before us a man most genuine and devout, very simple-minded, very patient, very learned. He set out in life with few advantages. He was indebted to the kindness of others for beginning his career at Oxford, though he owed it to himself that in due time he was admitted Fellow of Corpus Christi. He took orders in 1581, and was appointed to preach at Paul's Cross, an appointment attended with serious consequences. "Wet, weary, and weather-beaten," he was so touched by the kind ministrations of his hostess, that in gratitude he felt himself constrained to marry her daughter Joan, "who brought him neither beauty nor portion," but by whom he "was drawn from the tranquillity of his college: from that garden of piety, of pleasure, of peace and a sweet conversation, into the thorny wilderness of a busy world: into those corroding cares that attend a married priest and a country parsonage, which was Draiton Beauchamp, in Buckinghamshire." It was there that, after the lapse of a year, he received a visit from two old pupils, Edwin Sandys and George Cranmer. They found him with the *Odes* of Horace in his hand, tending sheep "like humble and innocent Abel." With much joy he accompanied his pupils to the house, but the interview was short, "for Richard was called to rock the cradle," and the guests departed, Cranmer saying ere he went, "Good Tutor, I am sorry your lot has fallen in no better ground as to your parsonage, and more sorry that your wife proves not a more comfortable companion after you have wearied yourself in your restless studies." The sympathy of the pupils did not evaporate in words. They could not provide him with a more comfortable companion, but

they did not rest till they had procured for him a better benefice. By the influence of Sandys' father, the Archbishop of York, the Mastership of the Temple was offered to Hooker, who accepted with reluctance, for his ideal was a country parish "where he might see God's blessing spring out of the earth, and be free from noise, and eat that bread which he might more properly call his own in privacy and quietness." His objections were overruled, and on March 17, 1585, in the thirty-fourth year of his age, he became Master of the Temple. But "the noise and oppositions" of that great place were so distasteful to him that he besought the Archbishop of Canterbury to send him back to the country, and in 1591 he was presented to the living of Boscum in the diocese of Salisbury. Four years later he was presented to Bishopsbourne in Kent, and there he continued till his death in 1600, "without any addition of dignity or profit."

Such was the noble, though comparatively uneventful story of one who has left an imperishable monument of industry, piety, and learning. He shrank from controversy, but he was forced into it, and he has, on the whole, left an example to all time of the way in which religious controversy may be profitably conducted. Assured of the righteousness of the Reformation, he yet could not approve the contention of those who seemed to hold that every belief and every custom which had prevailed before the Reformation must be condemned, and that the only way of safety lay in rushing to the opposite extreme. It so happened that when he was Master of the Temple the afternoon preacher there was Walter Travers, a very zealous opponent of all that in any degree suggested the unreformed Church; and his method of defending his opinions, having produced disturbances, led to his

eventual removal from his preachership. While he continued in his office the difference of the views enunciated by him and by Hooker was very marked. "In the morning it was Canterbury who preached; in the evening it was Geneva." But Hooker and Travers appear nevertheless to have entertained respect for each other.

Hooker was, however, driven to examine and to defend the opinions which he had formed, and the result was the *Ecclesiastical Polity*. The first five books were written by him; the remaining three were published after his death, and there is some suspicion as to their perfect genuineness. But the first five books are sufficient to give him a secure place among the greatest of English writers. One notable feature of the book is its moderation, that calm impartiality which obtained for him the name of "the judicious (or judicial) Hooker." With whatever faults his style may be chargeable, it has always been felt to be singularly suitable to his subject. Matter and manner are in remarkable accord. Of the spirit in which he wrote, we have a true indication in the often-quoted sentence from the preface: "There will come a time when three words uttered with charity and meekness shall receive a far more blessed reward than three thousand volumes written with disdainful sharpness of wit."

What sobriety and wisdom there is in the opening sentences of the work itself, in which he is about to defend the existing order of things against over-zealous reformers: "He that goeth about to persuade a multitude that they are not so well governed as they ought to be, shall never want attentive and favourable hearers, because they know the manifold defects whereunto every kind of regiment is subject; but the secret lets and difficulties which in public proceedings are innumerable

and inevitable, they have not ordinarily the judgment to consider."

Very soon, protesting against the tendency of men to dogmatise regarding things unseen, he utters the memorable and beautiful warning: "Dangerous it were for the feeble brain of man to wade far into the doings of the Most High: Whom although to know be life, and joy to make mention of His name, yet our soundest knowledge is to know that we know Him not as indeed He is, neither can know Him; and our safest eloquence concerning Him is our silence when we confess without confession that His glory is inexplicable, His greatness above our capacity and reach. He is above and we upon earth: therefore it behoveth our words to be wary and few."

He contended that, in the Church, order was necessary, yet that details had not been given in the Scriptures; that many things might be innocent and useful of which the Scriptures had not spoken. He saw as clearly as our modern poet that "Nothing is that errs from Law." There must be Law in the Church, since everything in heaven above and earth beneath acknowledged its sway. "Of Law there can be no less acknowledged than that her seat is the bosom of God, her voice the harmony of the world. All things in heaven and earth do her homage, the very least as feeling her care, and the greatest as not exempted from her power, both angels and men and creatures of what condition soever, though each in different sort and manner, yet all with uniform consent, admiring her as the mother of their peace and joy."

Hooker held that the three great fountains of divine authority are the Bible, the Church, and the Reason. He would hear them all speak; he would oblige none of them to be silent, lest haply he should lose some truth that God is teaching. There has been no greater defender of

the position of the Church of England than Hooker. But he does not unchurch those who have not Episcopal ordination; he is more occupied in proving against a narrow Presbyterianism that Episcopacy is allowable, than in contending that a Presbyterian communion is not within the Catholic pale. "It is," as Professor Dowden observes, "his high distinction that he cannot be identified with any party within the English Church: in his method and in his temper he represents nothing less than the better mind of England; its courage and its prudence; its audacity and its spirit of reverence; its regard for principles and its dislike of doctrinaire abstractions; its capacity for speculation controlled by its consideration of circumstances; its respect for the past and its readiness for new developments; its practical tendency; its lofty common-sense."

The death of Hooker, as told by Isaak Walton, is very touching. His desire was to finish his great work. Not many days before he died his house was robbed. When told, he asked, student-like, "Are my books and written papers safe?" and being assured that they were, he said: "Then it matters not; no other loss can trouble me." The day before his death he replied to one who asked what he was thinking of, "That he was meditating the number and nature of angels and their blessed obedience and order, without which peace could not be in heaven; and Oh, that it might be so on earth." Afterwards, lamenting his unworthiness, he yet rejoiced that he was at peace with all men, and God was at peace with him, filling his heart with a joy which could not be taken from him; and soon afterwards he fell asleep.

The prayer with which good Isaak Walton concludes the Biography may well be uttered for the clergy of all communions: "In the meantime, bless, O Lord! Lord bless his brethren, the clergy of this nation, with effectual

endeavours to attain, if not to his great learning, yet to his remarkable meekness, his godly simplicity, and his Christian moderation, for these will bring peace at the last. And, Lord! let his most excellent writings be blessed with what he designed when he undertook them, which was, Glory to Thee, O God on High, peace in Thy Church, and goodwill to mankind: Amen, Amen."

CHAPTER VIII

LANCELOT ANDREWES—JOHN DONNE

1555–1631

1. Of those who took part in the translation of the Scriptures, none has left a more honoured name than Lancelot Andrewes. He was a distinct representative of the school which recoiled from the after developments of the Reformation, and endeavoured to take refuge in the Church of the early ages.

He was born in 1555. He studied at Pembroke College, Cambridge, of which he was afterwards Master. Under Queen Elizabeth he became Dean of Westminster, and under King James he was successively Bishop of Chichester, of Ely, and of Winchester. He was a favourite Court preacher. "Through seventeen years it was he who every Christmas Day expounded to the Court of England the mystery of the Incarnation. For eight years his was the voice which at the beginning of Lent sounded to the same audience the note of fasting and self-denial. Through eighteen years they heard every Easter morning from his lips the varying lessons of the Resurrection." He was, despite his High Churchmanship, a strong opponent of the claims of the Church

of Rome, and wrote vigorous treatises in defence of the Church of England as reformed, writing in especial a refutation of sundry arguments adduced by the great Roman controversialist, Cardinal Bellarmine.

Andrewes was a man of remarkable learning and erudition; only one or two men in his generation were supposed to be superior. He united in himself various characters which as a rule do not go together. He was a continual student, amassing knowledge in many departments, and master of twenty languages. He was not only a student of books, but of nature. "He would often profess that to observe the grass, herbs, corn, trees, cattle, earth, waters, heavens, any of the creatures; and to contemplate their natures, orders, qualities, virtues, uses, etc., were ever to him the greatest mirth, content, and recreation that could be." He was a man of society, sought after for his acquirements and accomplishments, taking a decided and active part in public matters. But above all, he was a man of prayer. Five hours are said to have been spent by him in devotion in the days of his health, and when death began to throw its shadow over him, prayer became the very occupation of his life. "After the death of his brother, which he took as a certain sign and prognostic of his own death, till the hour of his dissolution, he spent all his time in prayer, and his prayer-book, which was private, was seldom seen out of his hands, and in the time of his fever and last sickness, besides the other prayers which were read to him, in which he repeated all the parts of the Confession and other petitions with an audible voice so long as his strength endured, he did, as was well observed by certain tokens in him, continually pray to himself, though he seemed otherwise to rest or slumber; and when he could no longer pray with his voice, yet by lifting up his eyes and hands he prayed still; and when both voice

and hands and eyes failed in their office, then *corde* with his heart he prayed, until it pleased God to receive his blessed soul to Himself."

It was this habitual prayer to which he would himself have attributed his power to achieve so much, to play such varied parts. In prayer the inspiration and the unity of his life were found. It was not till after his death that the *Devotions* which he employed for his own private use saw the light. They were originally composed, some in Greek and some in Latin. Translated into English, they have for many become a treasure-house of devotional expression. "Had you seen," said the first translator of them, "the original MS., happy in the glorious deformity thereof, being slubbered with his pious hand and watered with his penitential tears, you would have been forced to confess that book belonged to no other than pure and primitive devotion." The *Devotions*, as we now have them, contain prayers for morning and evening, and for each day of the week. They are remarkable outpourings of penitence, thanksgiving, supplication, frequently expressed in the words of Scripture or of ancient Eastern liturgies. "There is nothing," says Dr. Alexander Whyte, "in the whole range of devotional literature to be set beside Andrewes's incomparable *Devotions*." "There are books," says Dean Church, "which go deeper into the struggles, the questionings, the temptations, the discipline, the strange spiritual mysteries of the devout spirit. There are books which perhaps rise higher in the elevations of devotion; nowhere, that I know of, does the whole mind of the student, the divine, and the preacher, reflect itself in his prayers so simply and easily and harmoniously as in this book." From his intercessions, so minute and comprehensive, may be taken the following: "Grant to those who are chief in Court to be chief in virtue and

Thy fear; grant to the Parliament Thy holy wisdom, to our great men to do nothing against but for the truth. . . . Grant to farmers and graziers good seasons; to the fleet and fishers fair weather; to tradesmen not to over-reach one another; to mechanics to pursue their business lawfully, down to the meanest workman, down to the poor."

All persons with whom he had been associated, all places with which he had been identified, were remembered by him: "The city, the parish in which I was baptized, All Hallows Barking; my two schools, my University, my College; the parish committed to me, St. Giles's; the three churches of Southwell, St. Paul's, Westminster; the three dioceses of Chichester, Ely, Winton; my home, my kindred, my neighbours, my friends, those who have a claim on me."

Perhaps one of the most remarkable of these devout breathings is what is termed "An Horology," an invocation of Christ each hour of the day, thus: "Thou that very early in the morning, at the rising of the sun, didst rise again from the dead, raise us also daily to newness of life; Thou that at the third hour didst send down Thy Holy Ghost on the Apostles, take not that same Holy Spirit from us; Thou that at the seventh hour didst command the fever to leave the nobleman's son, if there be any fever in our hearts, if any sickness, remove it from us also; Thou that hast foretold Thy coming to Judgment in a day when we think not, and in an hour when we are not aware, grant that every day and every hour we may be prepared and waiting Thy advent."

Men might differ from Andrewes in opinion, might lament that he took part in sundry movements calculated to rouse opposition and perpetuate division, though he took part in them with the object of promoting unity,

but none could speak of him save with honour; and a Latin elegy from the pen of the youthful Milton commemorates the sorrow which his death produced.

II. The parents of Dr. John Donne were Roman Catholics, and he was brought up in their beliefs. He held those distinctive beliefs somewhat loosely, and at the age of eighteen "had betrothed himself to no religion that might give him any other denomination than a Christian. And reason and piety had both persuaded him that there could be no such sin as schism, if an adherence to some visible Church were not necessary." He began to study the question to which visible Church his adherence should be given, and read on both sides with avidity. The result of his studies was that he renounced the Roman Catholic Communion, and wrote a book called *The Pseudo Martyrs* in refutation of its claims. There were several circumstances connected with his youth which he afterwards deplored, and he especially grieved that writings of which he had reason to be ashamed, on account of their bad tendency, should continue unsuppressed. It was by the urgent and repeated requests of King James that Donne eventually agreed to take orders in the Church of England. He took the step, however, with much sincerity, and not simply because the king asked him. And no sooner was he ordained than he was hailed as one destined to eminence. No fewer than fourteen livings were offered to him in the course of a year. "It was felt," says Walton, "that the English Church had gained a second St. Austin; for I think none was so like him before his conversion, none so like St. Ambrose after it: and if his youth had the infirmities of the one, his age had the excellences of the other, the learning and holiness of both."

In the year 1621 he was made Dean of St. Paul's. As a preacher he attracted immense crowds and exercised a wonderful influence—"a preacher in earnest, weeping sometimes for his auditory, sometimes with them; always preaching to himself, like an angel from a cloud, but in none; carrying some, as St. Paul was, to heaven in holy raptures, and enticing others by a sacred art and courtship to amend their lives; here picturing a vice so as to make it ugly to those that practised it; and a virtue so as to make it beloved even by those that loved it not; and all this with a most particular grace and an inexpressible addition of comeliness." The style of his sermons seems to us in these days very strained and artificial, abounding in forced and quaint conceits. Often, however, his illustrations and expressions are very vivid; for example: "As men that rob houses thrust in a child at the window and he opens greater doors for them, so lesser sins make way for greater." "The tree lies as it falls, it is true; but yet it is not the last stroke that fells the tree, nor the last gasp that qualifies the man."

Donne was aware of approaching death, and dwelt on the subject with strange and almost morbid persistency:—

> Since I am coming to that holy room
> Where with Thy Choir of saints for evermore
> I shall be made Thy Music, as I come
> I tune my instrument here at the door,
> And what I must do there, think here before.

He yielded to the suggestion of a friend that a monument should be erected, but the style of monument he insisted on preparing himself. He had his portrait taken, standing in an urn and wrapped in a winding-sheet; the picture finished, he had it set by his bedside so that it

might be constantly before him; and after his death it was copied in the marble monument which is still to be seen in St. Paul's Cathedral. In his last illness he persevered in study and prayer, and when a day came round on which it had been arranged that he was to preach in St. Paul's, he could not be dissuaded from keeping the appointment. His death-like appearance shocked his hearers, and they rightly thought that he would never preach again. The text of his sermon was, "To God the Lord belong the issues from death."

And so he passed away, called by men of his day sometimes the greatest preacher, the greatest poet, the greatest wit; and though we may deem such praise extravagant, we may yet discern in him the lineaments of a noble man, who in penitence sought to serve his God. He was the friend of George Herbert, and was worthy to be named with him.

We may take leave of Donne by quoting that hymn to God the Father which he said gave him joy to compose, and afterwards seldom failed to restore that joy when he repeated it:—

Wilt Thou forgive that sin where I begun,
Which was my sin though it were done before?
Wilt Thou forgive that sin through which I run
And do run still, though still I do deplore?
When Thou hast done, Thou hast not done,
For I have more.

I have a sin of fear, that when I've spun
My last thread I shall perish on the shore;
But swear by Thyself that at my death Thy Son
Shall shine as He shines now and heretofore;
And having done that, Thou hast done:
I fear no more.

CHAPTER IX

BISHOP HALL

1574–1656

Joseph Hall was born at Bristow Park, Leicestershire, on July 1, 1574. His father was an officer who had served under Henry, Earl of Huntingdon, and had the government of the market town. His mother, "Winifrede of the house of the Bambridges," was, he has told us, "a woman of that rare sanctity that none of those pious matrons anciently famous for devotion need to disdain her admittance to comparison." She was weak in health, and for a time depressed in spirit, but she had so gained by this double trial that her sympathy was ever extended to those in trouble, and "it was hard for any friend to come from her discourse no whit holier. . . . Temptations, desertions, and spiritual comforts were her usual theme: shortly, for I can hardly take off my pen from so exemplary a subject, her life and death were saintlike."

From infancy he was by his parents dedicated to the ministry of the Church. An arrangement to place him under the care of a private tutor instead of sending him to the University had almost been made, when his elder brother generously interposed, offering rather to sell the land which he should inherit than that Joseph should not perfect his education. The future Bishop went to Emmanuel College, Cambridge, of which he became a Fellow in 1595. His days there were among the happiest of his life. His most delightful companions were books. "Study," he said, "itself is our life, from which we would not be debarred for worlds."

He was always of devout disposition, but this was

not in his case incompatible with the composition of very severe Satires. He has been termed the first English satirist. His works created great excitement. Persons who were ridiculed in his pages were exceedingly indignant, and others detected many faults in them from a literary point of view. He never forgot, however, the sacred calling to which he was dedicated. His Satires were always on the side of what he deemed righteousness, and ere long he took orders. He was an able preacher, and was always ready to preach as occasion offered, both in country villages abroad, and at home in "the most awful auditory of the University."

He had accepted the Mastership of the famous school at Tiverton, the gift of which lay with the Lord Chief Justice, when he received from the Lady Drury the offer of the rectory at Halsted. After some hesitation he accepted the rectory. He tells us that there he found "a dangerous opposite to the success of his ministry" in the person of "a witty and bold atheist, one Mr. Lilly," who did what he could to set the patron, Sir Robert Drury, against Hall. It has been suggested that this Lilly was no other than the author of *Euphues, or the Anatomy of Wit*, whose affected style of language has been caricatured both by Shakespeare and by Sir Walter Scott. Lilly may have entertained some jealousy of the literary reputation which Hall had acquired by his Satires, and sought to depreciate him in consequence. It seems, however, doubtful whether it was the same man. Whoever he was, his opposition was for a time the source of great annoyance to Hall. The annoyance was of brief duration. "Finding," says Hall in simple words, which are certainly liable to misconstruction, "the obduredness and hopeless condition of that man, I bent my prayers against him, beseeching God daily that He would be pleased to remove by some

means or other that apparent hindrance of my faithful labours, Who gave me an answer accordingly. For this malicious man, going hastily up to London, to exasperate my patron against me, was there and then swept away by the pestilence, and never returned to do any further mischief."

Anxious to see for himself the state of the Roman Catholic Church, Hall was glad of an invitation to accompany his friend Sir Edwin Bacon to the Continent. It had been the intention to sail from Harwich to Dunkirk, but after waiting many days for a favourable wind, they coasted along to Dover, and eventually got to Calais. Hall's desire to make the close acquaintance of the Roman Catholics led him more than once to enter into conversation and controversy with utter strangers, which had almost got him and his companion into trouble with the authorities. Near Brussels he met with two Italian captains who were very much astonished to learn that there were churches or baptism in England. At Flushing, on the homeward route, as it was expected that they should remain there some time, he hastened to see Middleburgh, but on returning, found the ship gone; and he had to wait long "for an inconvenient and tempestuous passage."

The living at Halsted was not large; he was obliged, as he says, "to write books in order to buy books"; consequently he was reluctantly obliged to accept the rectory of Waltham when it was offered to him, and in the course of a few years he was appointed Dean of Worcester.

The difficulties of his first expedition to the Continent did not deter him from going back more than once when he had opportunity. One of his visits was on a memorable occasion. He went by command of the king, James I., to attend the famous Synod of Dort. That

Synod of the Reformed Churches condemned the Arminian and affirmed the Calvinist system of doctrine. Hall had to leave very soon on account of his health, but although he might not be so extreme in his views as some members of the Synod, he would in the main have agreed with the decisions which were come to. He was a moderate Calvinist, just as the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England are Calvinist; but he was always seeking modes of reconciliation. He was thoroughly convinced that Episcopacy was the right government of the Church, defending it from the attacks of Rome on the one hand, and of Presbytery and Independency on the other. On the whole his charity is worthy of all praise. He who had begun his literary career by the composition of Satires, had a power of invective which he might have been tempted to abuse. It is all the more creditable that he kept it so rigorously in check. With his opinions, with his acts, we may not agree; but we must allow him the praise of seeking for peace. He came to Scotland with the king, and he did what he could to make Archbishop Laud's innovations acceptable; but his efforts were vain, and he had to share the fate of many another mediator; he was for a time regarded with suspicion by both parties whom he strove to reconcile.

His abilities and his character were such that, in spite of all opposition, he was made Bishop of Exeter in 1627, and Bishop of Norwich in 1641. He was regarded by Laud with enmity as a Puritan; and then, protesting against laws passed in the enforced absence of the Bishops from Parliament, he was committed to the Tower. On his release his property was sequestrated, and he lived in comparative poverty in the neighbourhood of Norwich till his death in 1656. He was, by his own request, buried in the Churchyard, not in the Church, "the House of God not being," as he said,

"a meet repository for the dead bodies of the greatest saints."

The works of Bishop Hall are published in ten large volumes, and selections from them have not infrequently been made. His *Contemplations on the Historical Passages of Holy Scripture* is now probably his best known work. Critically it may be of no weight, but one can hardly read a page without being struck by some spiritual suggestion, some quaint phrase, some striking antithesis. His style is in some respects more modern than that of any writer of his own day. The man himself shines through it all; and a spirit more genuine, more devout, more tender, more desirous of peace, more ardent in aspiration, it were difficult to find.

Forced into controversy he wrote polemical books, but by preference he wrote *Meditations* or *Devout Breathings*. His aim was edification, the building up of people in that faith which was common to all sections of Christendom. "It was ever the desire of my soul, even from my first entrance upon the public service of the Church, with Noah's dove, to have brought an olive branch to the tossed ark, and God knows how sincerely I have endeavoured it. Doubtless our main errand to the world is peace, and woe be to us if we do it not." "I wis it will be long enough ere we wrangle ourselves into Heaven: it must be true contrition, pure consciences, holy affections, heavenly dispositions, hearty devotions, sound regeneration, faith working by love, an humble walking with God, that shall help us thither." If there was any body of Christians that he viewed with antipathy, it was the Church of Scotland on account of her refusal to accept the changes which the king had desired to introduce. He was even inclined to place her beyond the pale of the Catholic Church, because, although in government she was identical with

those Churches on the Continent whom he acknowledged, the absence of bishops in their case he pronounced to be unavoidable, but in Scotland it was self-chosen. Still, in spite of this, the most vehement Scotsman or Presbyterian will hardly be able to read his works without coming to regard him with affection.

His description of his daily life may be taken as a sample at once of the man, of his spirit, and of his style. "First I desire to awake at those hours, not when I will, but when I must: pleasure is not a fit rule for rest, but health. Now when sleep is rather driven away than leaves me, I would ever awake with God. . . ." Dressing done, "after some while meditation I walk up to my masters and companions, my books, and sitting down amongst them with the best contentment, I dare not reach forth my hand to salute any of them till I have first looked up to heaven. After this, out of my very great variety, I call forth those which may best fit my occasions, wherein I am not too scrupulous of age. . . ." "And now the evening is come. No tradesman doth more carefully take in his wares, clear his shopboard, and shut his windows, than I would shut up my thoughts, and clear my mind. That student shall live miserably which, like a camel, lies down under his burden. All this done, calling together my family, we end the day with God. . . . Such are my common days, but God's day calls for another respect. I hate superstition on the one side, and looseness on the other, but I find it hard to offend in too much devotion, easy in profaneness. The whole week is sanctified by this day, and according to my care of this is my blessing on the rest."

CHAPTER X

GEORGE HERBERT

1593–1633

It was remarked by Coleridge that only those who had been Episcopalians always, brought up from childhood in the use of the forms of the Church of England, could thoroughly appreciate the poetry of Herbert. This assertion is much too sweeping. It applies with truth to only one or two poems at the most. His devout spirit finds recognition in spite of ecclesiastical distinctions. Whatever he might theoretically hold in regard to other religious communions, they have felt in him the expression of a common faith. Few writers have more remarkably the quality of awakening the love of their readers. Those who are acquainted with his works, whatever they may criticise in the style, are instinctively drawn to the man. Though he does not betray his personality nearly so much as many other poets, he makes himself better known. He becomes a familiar friend. Hardly any writer creates a sentiment of such affectionate tenderness. Those who have studied him will understand the reverent assertion of Dr. George MacDonald: "Among the keener delights of the life which is at the door, I look for the face of George Herbert, with whom to talk humbly would be in bliss a higher bliss."

The outlines of Herbert's life, which we take from Isaak Walton's charming Biography, are briefly these. He was born at Montgomery Castle, Wales, on April 3, 1593. His father's name was Richard, and his mother was Magdalene Newport, daughter of Sir Richard Newport of High Arkall, in the county of Salop. She

was a woman of noble character, who, by her devotion and wisdom, won the reverence and affection of her seven sons and three daughters. These all attained to positions of some distinction in their day. The two whose names live to the present hour are George, the fifth son, and Edward, the eldest. The careers of these two men are a striking instance of the unlikeness which may exist between members of the same family. The extraordinary difference in the careers of John Henry Newman and Francis William Newman, which startles people of our own day, finds a kind of parallel in the varying fortunes of the two Herberts. Edward, who became Lord Herbert of Cherbury, is frequently called the Father of English Deism. He could not acquiesce in the thought of a Revelation, and formulated for himself what he considered the essential elements of natural religion. He has left an Autobiography, which is now more read than his philosophical speculations. There is nothing philosophical in his Autobiography; it is a strange compound of egotism, shrewd observation, heartlessness, and superstition. A work more unlike what might be expected from the author of the treatise on *Truth*, which was for a time to have no inconsiderable influence on English religious thought, could not be conceived. It is very largely occupied with records of duels in which, with or without provocation, Lord Herbert had distinguished himself; and almost the only reference to the work which ranked him among the philosophical writers of the country is to be found at the close of the Autobiography, where, in the most solemn manner, he describes the reason which led him to write it. It is somewhat startling to learn that this treatise against the value of revelation was itself published under the influence of a special revelation from on high. He had shown the manuscript to various eminent scholars, who strongly

urged him to print it, but as its conclusions were so different from those generally accepted he hesitated about following their advice. However, to use his own words, "One fair day in the summer, my casement being opened towards the south, the sun shining clear and no wind stirring, I took my book *De Veritate* in my hand, and kneeling on my knees, devoutly said these words: 'O Thou Eternal God, Author of the light which now shines upon me, and Giver of all inward illumination, I do beseech Thee of Thy infinite goodness to pardon a greater request than a sinner ought to make; I am not satisfied enough whether I shall publish this book *De Veritate:* if it be for Thy glory, I beseech Thee, give me some sign from heaven; if not, I shall suppress it.' I had no sooner spoke these words but a loud though yet gentle noise came from the heavens (for it was like nothing on earth), which did so comfort and cheer me that I took my petition as granted, and that I had the sign I demanded, whereupon also I resolved to print my book. This, how strange soever it may seem, I protest before the Eternal God is true, neither am I in any way superstitiously deceived herein, since I did not only clearly hear the noise, but in the serenest sky that ever I saw, being without all cloud, did to my thinking see the place from whence it came."

Mr. Shorthouse is of opinion that in order "to understand the life of George Herbert, we must study that of his eldest brother, the Lord Herbert of Cherbury," as we have therein a vivid picture of the times, both in their serious business and in their frivolity. It has even been contended that, but for the force of circumstances driving him into a country parsonage, we see in Lord Herbert what George Herbert would have been. The difference between the two brothers was, we believe, greater than this, for although in a certain fastidiousness and court-

liness, in a certain foppery and love of high society, there was a family likeness between them, yet even in his most worldly days there was in George Herbert a strong sense of consecration to God and of obedience to the authority of the Church.

He received his early education at Westminster School, "where the beauties of his pretty behaviour and wit shined, and became so eminent and lovely in this his innocent age, that he seemed to be marked out for piety, and to become the care of heaven, and of a particular good angel to guard and guide him." Both at Westminster and at Cambridge, to which he afterwards went, he was a diligent student, and attained great eminence as a classical scholar. He was appointed Orator for the University in 1619, and King James I., having sent a copy of his book *Basilikon Doron* to the University, it fell to Herbert to acknowledge it, which he did in such a way as to attract the attention of the king.

Another performance by which he gained some reputation was a reply which he issued to an attack on the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge and the Church of England, by no less a man than Andrew Melville. Isaak Walton, who was not altogether unprejudiced, is very jubilant over Herbert's production, and says that he made such answer to Melville, "and such reflection on him and his Kirk, as might unbeguile any man that was not too deeply pre-engaged in such a quarrel." That the verses of Herbert were very remarkable and clever, as a boyish effort, appears undoubted, but it is liable to question whether his victory was so complete as Walton fancied. In one sense he had the best of the controversy, for Melville was committed to the Tower, "where he remained very angry for three years."

In his school and university days, Herbert's chief

recreation was found in the practice of music, of which he was passionately fond, and of which he said that "it did relieve his drooping spirits, compose his distracted thoughts, and raised his weary soul so far above earth that it gave him an earnest of the joys of heaven." And if any fault could be found with his behaviour, it was, says Walton, that "he kept himself too much retired and at too great a distance with all his inferiors; and his clothes seemed to prove that he put too great a value on his parts and parentage."

Among the friendships which the abilities of Herbert procured for him may be noted those of Sir Henry Wotton, Dr. Donne, Bishop Andrewes, and Lord Bacon. Bacon, indeed, held Herbert in such esteem as to submit to him his works before publication, and Bacon's translations of the Psalms were dedicated to Herbert, "as the best judge of Divine poetry." All the while, although unconsciously to himself, he had been preparing for that cure of souls which was to be the real work of his brief life. Herbert had been in training for the service of the State. In favour with the king and the nobility, he had hopes of high preferment. In expectation of some great diplomatic appointment, he had mastered French, Italian, and Spanish. Waiting for such an appointment, he had accepted a sinecure office which once in the reign of Queen Elizabeth had been possessed by Sir Philip Sidney, and was worth £120 per annum. "With this and his annuity, and the advantage of his college and of his oratorship, he enjoyed his genteel humours for clothes and courtlike company, and seldom looked towards Cambridge unless the king were there; but then he never failed." The death of some of his most powerful patrons, and of the king himself, put an end to his hopes in that direction; and after a longer or shorter season of mental perplexity he determined to take orders. "Whereas my

birth"—it seems to be with regard to this determination that he wrote—"and spirit rather took

> The way that takes the town :
> Thou didst betray me to a lingering book
> And wrap me in a gown :
> I was entangled in a world of strife
> Before I had the power to change my life."

Some of his friends strongly opposed his determination to become a clergyman, representing it "as too mean an employment, and too much below the level of his birth and the excellent abilities and endowments of his mind." But his reply was: "Though the iniquity of the late times have made clergymen meanly valued, and the sacred name of priest contemptible, yet I will labour to make it honourable by consecrating all my learning and all my poor abilities to advance the glory of that God that gave them." Nothing can be more unjust than the insinuation that in spite of the faithfulness with which he fulfilled the duties of his sacred office, he always looked back with longing to the ambitions which he had renounced, and that his poems are "the enigmatical history of a difficult resignation," the expression of the effort which he had continually to make to reconcile himself to his lot. Once he put his hand to the plough, he never looked back. He found in his sacred office a joy and a glory greater than he had ever imagined in the days of his ambition.

Ordained deacon, he was made prebend of Layton Ecclesia in the diocese of Lincoln in 1626, when he was thirty-three years of age. The church had fallen into such ruin and decay that for twenty years the parishioners had been unable to meet in it. By the exertions of Herbert it was speedily restored and beautified. "He lived to see it so wainscoted as to be exceeded by none; and by his order the reading-pew and pulpit were a little distant

from each other, and both of an equal height, for he would often say, 'They should neither have a precedency or priority of the other, but that prayer and preaching, being equally useful, might agree like brethren, and have an equal honour and estimation.'"

It was not, however, at Layton Ecclesia that his work as a clergyman was to be chiefly done. In 1630, a few months after his marriage with Jane, daughter of Mr. Charles Danvers, of Bainton, a near kinsman of the Earl of Danby, Herbert was presented to the living of Bemerton, near Salisbury. His health had been delicate for a time, and he had been so sensitively thinking of his unfitness for his sacred calling that he had not yet been ordained priest, and had begun to fear that he should be obliged to resign. The Bishop of London, Dr. Laud, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury, overcame his objections. "The Bishop," according to the quaint narrative of Walton, "did the next day so convince Mr. Herbert that the refusal of it was a sin, that a tailor was sent for to come speedily from Salisbury to take measure, and make him canonical clothes against next day; which the tailor did; and Mr. Herbert being so habited, went with his presentation to the learned Dr. Davenant, who was then Bishop of Salisbury, and he gave him institution immediately, and he was also the same day, which was April 26th, 1630, inducted into the good and more pleasant than healthful parsonage of Bemerton, which is a mile from Salisbury."

His life here was to last only for three years, years in which he was gradually succumbing to the inroads of consumption; but they were years of singular usefulness and happiness. He has in his *Country Parson* described in a manner never excelled the ideal of a parish clergyman's life; and that ideal was, as near as is possible for frail humanity, fulfilled in his own person. There were

in the parish twenty cottages and one hundred and twenty souls. With such a small flock it might be supposed that he would have found little to do; but he devoted himself to its welfare with as much assiduity and self-denial as if it had numbered thousands. He knew, which of course was not difficult, the circumstances of all his people; he was able to accommodate his instructions to their needs. Twice a day he had prayers in the chapel adjoining the parsonage, to which many of the parishioners came, and "some of the meaner sort of his parish did so love and reverence Mr. Herbert that they would let their plough rest when Mr. Herbert's saint's bell rung to prayers, that they might also offer their devotions to God with him, and would then return back to their plough. And his most holy life was such that it begot such reverence to God and to him that they thought themselves the happier when they carried Mr. Herbert's blessing back with them to their labour."

Too soon, however, this beautiful life was to come to an end. He grew so weak that he could not even read prayers, but he took delight in hearing them read by others. A month or so before he died he sent a message to the saintly Nicolas Ferrar of Little Gidding, of whose manner of life so vivid an account will be found in *John Inglesant:* "I pray give my brother Ferrar an account of the decaying condition of my body, and tell him that I do not repine, but am pleased with my want of health; and tell him my heart is fixed on that place where true joy is only to be found, and that I long to be there, and do wait for my appointed change with hope and patience." He then added: "Sir, I pray deliver this little book to my dear brother Ferrar, and tell him he shall find in it a picture of the many spiritual conflicts that have passed betwixt God and my soul before I could subject mine to the will of Jesus, my Master, in whose service I have now

found perfect freedom. Desire him to read it, and then if he can think it may turn to the advantage of any dejected poor soul, let it be made public; if not, let him burn it: for I and it are less than the least of God's mercies." The book thus entrusted to Ferrar's judgment was *The Temple, or Sacred Poems and Private Ejaculations.*

The Sunday before his death Herbert called for his lute or viol, and saying, "My God, my God, my music shall find Thee, and every string shall have his attribute to sing," he sang part of the poem on "Sunday":—

> The Sundays of man's life
> Threaded together on time's string
> Make bracelets to adorn the wife
> Of the eternal glorious King:
> On Sundays heaven's door stands ope;
> Blessings are plentiful and rife,
> More plentiful than hope.

So he prayed and rejoiced to the day of his death. To one recalling his rebuilding of Layton church, and other deeds of benevolence, his only answer was, "They be good works if they be sprinkled with the blood of Christ, and not otherwise." As the last conflict drew near, he requested his wife and nieces, if they loved him, to go into the next room, as the sight of their sorrow made him sorrowful. Then after giving some directions in an unfaltering voice regarding his will to the friends who remained with him, he said: "I am now ready to die. Lord, forsake me not now my strength faileth me, but grant me mercy for the merits of my Jesus; and now, Lord, Lord, now receive my soul," and so passed away.

The work of Herbert which remains to delight and edify the Church is the little book which he sent for the inspection of Nicolas Ferrar, *The Temple, or Sacred*

Poems and Private Ejaculations. It abounds in the conceits and quaint turns of expression which were peculiar to that age, but its genuine devotion, and frequent felicity of expression, have made it dear alike to the devout and to the literary.

The great Puritan, Baxter, wrote: "Next the Scripture poems, there are none so savoury to me as Mr. George Herbert's. I know that Cowley and others far excel Herbert in wit and accurate composure; but as Seneca takes with me above all his contemporaries, because he speaketh things by words feelingly and seriously, like a man that is past jest, so Herbert speaks to God like a man that really believeth in God, and whose business in the world is most with God. Heart work and heaven work make up his book." Still more interesting is the reference made to him by the melancholy William Cowper: "I was struck not long after my settlement in the Temple with such a dejection of spirits, as none but they who have felt the same can have the least conception of. Day and night I was on the rack, lying down in horror, and rising up in despair. I presently lost all relish for those studies to which I had before been closely attached. The Classics had no longer any charm for me. I had need of something more salutary than amusement, but I had no one to direct where to find it. At length I met with Herbert's poems, and gothic and uncouth as they were, I yet found in them a strain of piety which I could not but admire. This was the only author I had any delight in reading. I pored over him all day long; and though I found not what I might have found, a cure for my malady, yet it never seemed so much alleviated as when I was reading him."

Among the more notable of his poems may be named: "The Church Porch," "Man," "The Collar," "Virtue," "Sunday," "Sin," "The Pulley," and "Aaron."

CHAPTER XI

JEREMY TAYLOR

1613–1667

Jeremy Taylor was born at Cambridge in 1613. His father was a barber of limited means, but apparently of fair education. Jeremy was sent to school when he was only three years old, and at the age of thirteen he entered Caius College, Cambridge, as a sizar. His career was distinguished. He took such degrees and honours as came naturally in his way. We have no record of his mental and spiritual history during his youth, but he appears to have been always of an earnest devout spirit, and the ministry of the Church was the sphere to which he dedicated himself. He was ordained in 1634, and became public lecturer at St. Paul's, "where he preached to the admiration and astonishment of his auditory, and by his florid and youthful beauty, and sweet and pleasant airs, and sublime and raised discourses, he made his hearers take him for some young angel, newly descended from the visions of glory." It was his lot very soon after his ordination to preach before Archbishop Laud, and the Archbishop at once discerned the tokens of genius. The discourse, in the Archbishop's opinion, was "beyond exception and beyond imitation"; but he wisely was of opinion that the constant strain of preaching would be injurious to so young a man, and advised him, for the due development of his powers, to study much and preach seldom. Taylor has been pronounced devoid of humour, but his reply to Laud is surely a manifestation of that quality. "The wise Prelate thought him too young; but the great youth humbly

begged his grace to pardon that fault, and promised, if he lived, he would mend it." Perhaps attracted still more by the readiness of the reply, Laud caused Taylor to be removed to All Souls' College, Oxford, where he would find time and opportunity for study, and preparation for the work for which he seemed destined. If all Archbishop Laud's actions had been as judicious as this, various pages of the Church History of England and Scotland would have been unwritten. Were his example in this respect imitated in our own day, many youthful preachers, whose abilities are ruined by continual taxes on their time and energy, would bless his memory.

Taylor was appointed rector of Uppingham, Rutlandshire, in 1637, and married Phœbe Langdale in 1639. The beginning of his residence at Uppingham apparently was peaceful and happy, but clouds were gathering. He had to see his wife and one of his children borne to the grave, and ere long he was to be involved in the calamities which the great civil war brought upon the nation. He was a zealous upholder of Episcopacy and Monarchy. He wrote a treatise, *Episcopacy Asserted.* He was Chaplain to King Charles I., and when the Parliamentary Army gained the upper hand, such a man could not pass unnoticed and unscathed. He was expelled from his living, and shared in the hardships and dangers of camp life.

Taylor is said to have visited King Charles I. not long before his execution, and to have received from him in token of regard "his watch, and a few pearls and rubies." Taylor led for a time a chequered life—now a prisoner in the hands of the Parliamentarians in Wales; now teaching in a small school; now marrying Joanna Bridges, over whose parentage a mystery rests, and settling down for a year or two on her small property in Car-

marthenshire. "In the great storm which dashed the vessel of the Church in pieces," so he writes in the dedication of *The Liberty of Prophesying*, published about this time, "I was cast on the coast of Wales, and in a little boat thought to have enjoyed that rest and quietness which in England I could not hope for. Here I cast anchor; and thinking to ride safely, the storm followed me with so impetuous a violence that it broke a cable, and I lost my anchor; and here again I was exposed to the mercy of the sea, and the gentleness of an element which could neither distinguish things nor persons. And but that He who stilleth the raging of the sea and the noise of His waves, and the madness of His people, had provided a plank for me, I had been lost to all the opportunities of content and study. But I know not whether I have been more preserved by the courtesies of my friends, or the gentleness and mercies of a noble enemy."

Among the friends who stood him in good stead were Lord Hatton and Lord and Lady Carbery. The latter have become especially associated with his memory. He dedicated works to Lady Carbery. He named one of them after her residence, *Golden Grove*, and he preached her funeral sermon. At this period, and under that friendly care, he wrote also *Holy Living*, *Holy Dying*, and *The Great Exemplar*.

It was during his stay in this quiet retreat that he not only produced some of his most valuable books, but preached many of his most wonderful sermons. For an ordinary country congregation, anything more inappropriate than some of these discourses, if they were actually preached as they are printed, could not be imagined. They are of great length, and they abound in learned and recondite allusions. But the likelihood is that his hearers would be largely composed of well

educated people, and that they would be able to understand him.

Lady Carbery died in 1650, and her memory is preserved in the glowing sermon which Jeremy Taylor preached after the funeral. Lord Carbery married again, and his second wife was equally friendly to Taylor. Her also he has praised, but her memory is kept perhaps even more fresh from the fact that she is the "Lady" in Milton's *Comus*. Days of trial, personal and domestic, were again at hand. He was more than once imprisoned for passages in his writings which gave offence to the victorious Puritans. In the preface to the Devotional Manual called *Golden Grove* he poured forth a lamentation over the sad changes which had taken place in Church and State. "Now instead of this excellency and constitution of religion, the people are fallen under the harrows and saws of impertinent and ignorant preachers, who think all religion is a sermon, and all sermons ought to be libels against truth and old governors, and expounded chapters that the meaning may never be understood,—and pray that they may be thought able to talk, but not to hold their peace—casting not to obtain anything but wealth and victory, power and plunder. And the people have reaped the fruits apt to grow on such crabstocks: they grow idle and false, hypocrites and careless; they deny themselves nothing that is pleasant; they despise religion, forget government, and some never think of heaven; and they that do, think to go thither in such paths which all the age of the Church did give men warning of, lest they should that way, go to the devil."

This portrait, whether faithful or not, was decidedly unflattering; it was held to be libellous, and Taylor was imprisoned. He was imprisoned yet again for an act of which not he, but his publisher, was really guilty. This

offence consisted in the publisher having affixed to a collection of "Offices or Forms of Prayer in Cases Ordinary and Extraordinary," "a print of our Saviour in the attitude of prayer." This was considered a breach of the law against idolatry, and as Royston, the publisher, kept out of the way, Taylor was seized and thrown into the Tower. The length of these vexatious imprisonments appears to be doubtful.

He had acquired the admiration and warm friendship of John Evelyn, the famous diarist. Evelyn and he consoled each other in the loss of beloved children; and Evelyn not only relieved Taylor more than once in the deep poverty to which he was reduced by the vicissitudes of the times, but bestowed a pension upon him. By Evelyn also he seems to have been introduced to Lord Conway, who made him an offer which altogether changed the current of his life, and eventually brought him such honours as he was to be permitted to enjoy. An alternate lectureship at Lisburn, in the county of Antrim, was placed at his disposal. He at first hesitated about accepting it; it was not a lucrative post, and Taylor demurred to being conjoined with a lecturer of different views. "I like not the condition of being a lecturer under the disposal of another, nor to serve in my semicircle where a Presbyterian and myself shall be like Castor and Pollux, one up and the other down." His difficulties were removed somehow, and he devoted himself henceforward to the work of the Irish Church, of which he remains the greatest ornament. He had often been accused of leanings towards Romanism, but no one has more plainly exposed the evils which that system has perpetuated in Ireland, or striven more persistently to win the nation to the Protestant faith. The old stories of his leanings towards Rome were at first circulated; he had even to go to the Privy Council at Dublin in order to dispel charges of treachery brought

against him by some Presbyterian. But these charges were easily disproved, and he was allowed to lecture in peace. The time was coming when his party were to have the upper hand, and he was to share to some extent in their victory.

Oliver Cromwell died in 1658; Richard Cromwell was unable to succeed his father; and after various negotiations and intrigues, Charles II. was in 1660 restored to the throne. Considering all that he had suffered, we may understand the exuberance of joy with which Taylor greeted this event, and dedicated to that not over-scrupulous Christian his great work on *Cases of Conscience*. "Since God," he wrote, "hath left off to smite us with an iron rod, and hath once more said unto these nations, 'They shall serve the Lord their God, and David their King, whom I have raised up unto them,' now our duty stands on the sunny side: it is our work to rejoice in God and God's anointed, and to be glad, and worthily to accept of our prosperity in all our business." Subsequently addressing the Viceroy, the Duke of Ormond, he dwelt on the miseries which "the very poor Church" had from time immemorial undergone, and gave thanks that God had sent "such a king." "Such a king!" is Coleridge's comment, "O sorrow and shame! Why, why, O genius, didst thou suffer thy darling son to crush the fairest flower of thy garland beneath a mitre of Charles's putting on?"

Honours were heaped upon Taylor. He was made Bishop of Down and Connor, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Dublin, and Bishop of Dromore. But, though freed from the poverty which had harassed so much of his life, his latter days were clouded with many sorrows. His position in Ireland has been compared to the position of Archbishop Leighton in Scotland, and there is justice in the parallel. He was striving to win

over a people greatly hostile, to break down prejudices deeply rooted, to reconcile those with whom it was a point of religion to hate one another, and the result of his efforts could not cheer him much. All things considered, he acted with charity and forbearance. The difference between the views advocated in the *Liberty of Prophesying* and the principles by which he was sometimes guided in the administration of his diocese, has, although unquestionable, been exaggerated; and he would have been hardly human had such a difference not existed. He exercised hospitality and benevolence to the extent of his resources, and practised the devotion which he recommended to others: "Feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, providing for the fatherless, apprenticing poor children, and maintaining youths of promise at the University, in these offices of Christian stewardship his remaining years were passed." And these years were not many. He died on August 13, 1667, of a fever which he had caught ten days before. There is reason to believe that his end was hastened by his grief at the misconduct of one son who fell in a duel, and at the ill-health of another who lay dying of consumption at the time he himself passed away.

Jeremy Taylor has left no autobiography like Baxter or Bunyan; and much though he dwells on the duty of self-examination, he does not describe the workings of his own mind. Thus neither of the outward events of his life nor of its inner phases can we have so distinct an impression as we have of others. Yet from the records which we possess of his career, and from the occasional glimpses which his writings reveal of his heart, he is disclosed as a figure very great and very lovable. It is singular that while there is so little introspection in his many works, scarcely any works of the period are more frequently adorned with the author's portrait; and the

countenance is one which, in its mingled sweetness and austerity, beauty and simplicity, accords well with his writings.

He wrote many treatises of controversy, but it was not as a controversialist that he excelled. Whether in "asserting" Episcopacy, or in "dissuading" from Popery, his arguments are frequently far from convincing. This arose from two very opposite causes. He was undoubtedly anxious to be fair to his opponents; but his impetuosity of temperament did not permit him always to examine minutely enough the grounds of some statement on which he relied. Consequently he sometimes surrendered a position which he ought to have maintained, and at other times brought forward, with great parade, evidence which would not bear a moment's consideration. Sometimes his love of fairplay made him lay too much stress on an opposing argument; at other times his love of victory made him seize any weapon that promised to be momentarily available.

He is perhaps the greatest prose poet in the language. "Jeremy Taylor!" to repeat the exclamation of Coleridge, "most eloquent of divines! Had I said of men, Cicero would forgive me, and Demosthenes nod assent." In fertility of illustration, in gorgeousness of diction, in richness of allusion, in tenderness of fancy, he is without a rival. It is true that he errs on the side of extravagance and exaggeration, that the floridity of his style, the multiplication of images, the mixture of the sublime and the grotesque, permit a critic to point out many faults. Even in his own day the witty Dr. South, whose invectives were usually reserved for the Puritans, could not refrain from ridiculing Jeremy Taylor's exuberance of language. But when all faults are granted, he remains unsurpassed. That his language is often more akin to poetry than to prose is shown in the fact that Southey

inserted in *Thalaba*, almost without alteration, a passage from Taylor's sermon on "The Marriage Ring," to illustrate the blessedness of chastening.

In the region of devotion and practice, of the heart and the spirit, of eloquence and of imagination, he stands supreme. In that region all his inconsistencies are reconciled, all his weak reasonings are forgotten, all his "heresies are condoned." We are face to face with a man who is weary of needless strife, who would fain see unity at almost any price, who would by almost any means lift men out of their indifference and vice, and make them live under the power of the world to come. The themes on which he habitually dwells are the same as those which prevail in Baxter. The "Brevity of Life" is continually and pathetically touched upon; the necessity and delight of Prayer find continual expression; the duty of observing the Sacraments and Ordinances of the Church is insisted on with the most marvellous elaboration. But the utter worthlessness of all acceptance of creeds, however sound, and performance of ritual, however reverent, and observance of ordinances, however authoritative, without corresponding practice, was never more plainly or daringly proclaimed. Though not addicted to reveal his own spiritual moods, he shows a subtle knowledge of the heart and of the excuses with which it deludes itself.

For that quality of unmasking a man, and making him see himself as he is, the sermon on the "Deceitfulness of the Heart" may be profitably compared with some of Newman's. In that sermon occurs the quaint illustration: "He was prettily and fantastically troubled, who, having used to put his trust in dreams, one night dreamed that all dreams were vain; for he considered, if so, then this was vain; and then dreams might be true for all this; but if they might be true, then his dream might be so on

equal reason, and then dreams were vain, because this dream which told him so was true, and so round again."

The actual remedy for division and contention that Taylor proposes in the *Liberty of Prophesying* may perhaps be impracticable, but who can read that noble work without a deeper glow of charity, without a conviction of the duty of bearing long with those whose views may seem to us the most erroneous? Outside the Bible itself, is there a nobler parable than that with which he concludes the volume? "I end with a story which I find in the Jews' Books. When Abraham sat at his tent door, according to his custom, waiting to entertain strangers, he espied an old man stooping and leaning on his staff, weary with age and travel, coming towards him, who was a hundred years of age. He received him kindly, washed his feet, provided supper, and caused him to sit down; but observing that the old man ate and prayed not, nor begged for a blessing on his meat, asked him why he did not worship the God of Heaven. The old man told him that he worshipped the fire only, and acknowledged no other God. At which answer Abraham grew so jealously angry that he thrust the old man out of his tent, and exposed him to all the evils of the night and an unguarded condition. When the old man was gone, God called to Abraham, and asked him where the stranger was. He replied, 'I thrust him away because he did not worship Thee.' God answered him, 'I have suffered him these hundred years although he dishonoured me, and couldst thou not endure him one night, when he gave thee no trouble?' Upon this, saith the story, Abraham fetched him back again, and gave him hospitable entertainment and wise instruction. Go and do thou likewise, and thy charity will be rewarded by the God of Abraham."

CHAPTER XII

RICHARD BAXTER

1615–1691

Boswell once asked Dr. Johnson what works of Baxter should be read. Dr. Johnson's concise and comprehensive answer was: "Read any of them; they are all good." It may be questioned whether Johnson was able to speak with authority about the whole of Baxter's works; it might almost be questioned whether any mortal man has ever read them all. He was one of the most voluminous writers that ever lived. The productions of his most industrious contemporaries make a sorry show when placed beside Baxter's. "The works of Bishop Hall," according to a comparison which has been made, "amount to ten volumes octavo; Lightfoot's to thirteen; Jeremy Taylor's to fifteen; Dr. Goodwin's to about twenty; Dr. Owen's extend to twenty-eight; Baxter's, if printed in a uniform edition, would not be comprised in less than sixty volumes."

Our amazement at this prodigious industry is increased when we remember that it was the achievement of a man who lived in very troublous times, who was incessant in pastoral labours, who was by no means inactive in public matters, whose education was neglected in his youth, and who suffered from ill-health so perpetual and so harassing as might well have excused him from toil of any kind, whether physical or mental. There is something paradoxical in his whole career: always crying for peace, but never out of strife; always longing for rest, but never permitted the briefest relaxation; without the advantage of an ordinary education, but possessed of an erudition which

few have surpassed; in sickness and feebleness accomplishing tasks for which the utmost energy and endurance were necessary; at twenty years of age having "the symptoms of fourscore," yet amid fatigues and cares and privations enough to test the most robust, struggling on till fourscore itself was almost within his view. Such were the strange conditions under which Richard Baxter lived.

He was born in 1615 at Rowton in Shropshire. Little attention was paid to his education; but from an early age he was studiously inclined, and read whatever came in his way. His first introduction to life appears singularly incompatible with his character and later history. When he was about eighteen he went to Court in the capacity of page, and it was regarded as the highway to fortune. But Baxter was not born to be a courtier, and in the course of a month he renounced all the great expectations which such a situation held out, and resolved to dedicate himself to the ministry of the Church. He was ordained at the age of twenty-one. He was in feeble health, and it was a time of great ecclesiastical agitation. He had various scruples both as to his own fitness and as to the propriety of certain forms of subscription. Especially he doubted whether he ought to take what was called "the et-cetera oath." This was a promise exacted from all candidates for orders: "Nor will I ever give my consent to alter the government of the Church by archbishops, bishops, deans, and archdeacons, *etc.*, as it stands now established, and as by right it ought to stand." The "etc." might be made to cover almost anything, and persons who sought any reform of the Church in any direction might, by a method not wholly obsolete, be taunted with breaking their ordination vows, and be driven from the Church. Baxter, however, having overcome his scruples, took the

required pledge, and in 1640 accepted an invitation from the inhabitants of Kidderminster to take the place of their vicar. The vicar and two curates were apparently alike incompetent for their duties, and a disgrace to their sacred office; they do not seem to have made any objections to their work being done for them by another. The change effected by Baxter on Kidderminster was marvellous. Both by his preaching and his personal influence he made an impression to which it would be hard to find a parallel. The manners and customs of the town were changed; indifference, dissipation, and vice gave place to sobriety, righteousness, and godliness. But he was not suffered to remain in a sphere of labour so dear to him. Civil war broke out; and Baxter, though by no means agreeing with all the views of the Parliamentary party, felt himself constrained by conviction to espouse their cause as on the whole the cause of right, and acted for a time as Chaplain to Whalley's Dragoons. He had no admiration for Cromwell, and the portrait which he draws of the Protector is far from flattering. During his connection with the Parliamentary Army, he exerted himself, and often with success, on behalf of moderation. While acting as Chaplain he was assailed by a violent illness, and was obliged to retire to the country house of Sir Thomas Rouse of Rouse Lench, Worcestershire, and there, "in continual expectation of death, with one foot in the grave," he wrote the *Saints' Everlasting Rest*. After a time the progress of events permitted him to return to his beloved Kidderminster, and to resume his labours; but when, in the revulsion of popular feeling after the death of Cromwell, Charles II. was recalled to the throne, Baxter, although he was honestly glad that the monarchy was restored, and although he preached a Thanksgiving Sermon on the occasion, was not to be forgiven for the part which he

had previously taken in resisting the foolish and tyrannical measures of the Court. The old attempts to enforce uniformity were revived. That black Bartholomew's Day came, on which two thousand of the clergy of the Church of England were ejected from their parishes. Baxter was offered the Bishopric of Hereford, but declined it, and the greater part of the remainder of his life was spent in the endurance of persecutions great or small. He was expelled from Kidderminster; his goods were spoiled; he was thrown into prison. At Acton in Middlesex he lived in comparative quiet for a number of years, enjoying the friendship of the great judge, Sir Matthew Hale, and writing treatise upon treatise.

The Duke of Lauderdale, who, although he was a member of the Westminster Assembly which compiled the Confession of Faith, is mainly remembered as a persecutor of the Covenanters, tried, by the offer of a Bishopric or Professorship, to secure the assistance of Baxter in settling the ecclesiastical affairs of Scotland. But Baxter was not to be bribed. "I would request," so he wrote to Lauderdale, "that I might be allowed to live quietly to follow my private studies, and might once again have the use of my books which I have not seen these ten years. . . . If I be sent to Newgate for preaching Christ's Gospel (for I dare not sacrilegiously renounce my calling, to which I am consecrated *per sacramentum ordinis*) I would request the favour of a better prison where I may but walk and write." These moderate requests were not complied with, and Baxter had to remain in enforced silence for a year or two longer. Some slight relief was afforded by an enactment issued in 1672, whereby "a convenient number of public meeting places" were granted to Nonconformists, "provided the persons were approved by the king and only met in

places sanctioned by him, with open doors, and did not preach seditiously or against the Church of England." Of this relief Baxter availed himself, and began to hold meetings in London; but every now and again he was interrupted by the authorities, and thrown into prison. When James II. of England and VII. of Scotland mounted the throne, matters went from bad to worse. Perhaps a more contemptible travesty of justice was never perpetrated than the trial of Baxter by the infamous Judge Jeffreys; it reads more like a caricature by Dickens than a page of sober history. Not a word would this remarkable judge hear in defence either from prisoner, or from witness, or from counsel; and an obsequious jury brought in a verdict of guilty. "My Lord," said Baxter, with a dignified reference to his true and noble friend Sir Matthew Hale, "there was once a Chief Justice who would have treated me very differently." "There is not an honest man in England," retorted Jeffreys, "but looks on thee as a knave." The Chief Justice was, however, overruled in his desire that the knave should be flogged through London; and Baxter was, for his few indignant words of remonstrance against the persecutions to which Nonconformists had been exposed, sentenced simply to fine and imprisonment. He was set at liberty in about a year and a half on the intercession of Lord Powis, a Roman Catholic nobleman. Advancing age and feebleness hindered him from public work in his later days. The Revolution in 1688 was no doubt in some respects welcomed by him; but he had retired from the conflict, and sought only with his ever busy pen to bring men to the obedience of Christ. Surrounded with friends, in trustfulness and peace, he waited for the end. On December 8, 1691, aged 76, to one who asked him how he was, he summoned strength to answer "Almost

well," and soon afterwards he entered into the Saints' Everlasting Rest.

The most popular of Baxter's works is *The Saints' Everlasting Rest*, "written," as was said on the title-page of the first edition, "by the author for his own use, in the time of his languishing, when God took him off from all public employment." The edition at present most widely circulated is a mere abridgment, not containing above a quarter of the original. Although in the abridged edition many fine passages are omitted, yet as one glances over the complete work, one sees that for use in the present day abridgment of some kind was necessary. The subject is treated with a minuteness which cannot but be wearisome; sundry metaphysical questions which have lost their interest are examined at great length; topics which have little bearing on the subject are introduced; reasons of the most puerile kind are advanced in behalf of Christianity; stories of witchcraft and apparitions are related with a gravity surprising in one who was not at all of a credulous disposition. But with all deductions made, what a noble book it is! How pure is its tone! how lofty are its aspirations! "Rest: how sweet a word is this to mine ear! To my wearied senses and languid spirits, it seems a quieting powerful opiate: to my dulled powers it is spirit and life: to my dark eyes it is both eye-salve and a prospective: to my taste it is sweetness: to mine ear it is melody: to my hands and feet it is strength and nimbleness: . . . Rest, not as the stone that rests on the earth, nor as these clods of flesh shall rest in the grave: no, no, we have another kind of rest than these: rest we shall from all our labours, which were but the way and means to rest. O blessed rest, when we shall rest from sin but not from worship, from suffering and sorrow but not from solace." This was the rest which to the weary spirit

and worn frame of Baxter appeared so desirable; this was the rest which, by so many motives, he exhorted others to seek, and for the attainment of which he laid down directions so particular.

Of other devotional and practical works of Baxter, *The Call to the Unconverted*, *The Divine Life*, *Directions to Weak Christians*, *Dying Thoughts*, *The Reformed Pastor*, are among the most generally known. The careless and indifferent were never more passionately and reasonably remonstrated with than in *The Call to the Unconverted*. There could not be a more subtle and unsparing examination of the motives by which men may deceive themselves than the *Mischiefs of Self-Ignorance, and the Benefits of Self-Acquaintance*. A higher ideal of the work of the Christian ministry has never been drawn than *The Reformed Pastor*. But it is doubtful whether his *Directions to Weak Christians*, little as they are comparatively known, would not be found as profitable as any of his works, to a very large class. The spiritual difficulties of the scrupulous are treated with remarkable tenderness and common sense, and the dangers of the ignorant and shallow are exposed with relentless firmness. His *Narrative of his own Life and Times*, a folio volume published after his death under the title of *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, is in its entirety too unwieldy and cumbersome to be read through by many people from beginning to end. But there is one passage which can quite easily be detached from the rest, and which contains his review in old age of the modifications which his opinions and temper had undergone with enlarged experience; and this passage has few superiors in autobiographical literature. "I make bold to say," was the strong assertion of Dean Stanley regarding it, "that in permanent practical instruction it as much excels anything even in the *Confessions* of Augustine as in ordinary fame it falls

below them." It is the frank statement of errors outgrown, of mistakes deplored, of new light welcomed of imperfections remaining, of faults still unconquered, of a charity ever increasing. Here are a few of the lessons which he had learned in his chequered career:—

I am not for narrowing the Church more than Christ Himself alloweth us; nor for robbing Him of any of His flock.

And I can never believe that a man may not be saved by that religion which doth but bring him to the true love of God and to a heavenly mind and life; nor that God will ever cast a soul into hell that truly loveth Him. Also, at first it would disgrace any doctrine with me, if I did but hear it called Popery and Antichristian; but I have long learned to be more impartial, and to know that Satan can use even the names of Popery and Antichrist against a truth.

I cannot be of their opinion that think God will not accept him that prayeth by the Common Prayer-Book, and that such forms are a self-invented worship which God rejecteth, nor yet can I be of their mind which say the like of extemporary prayers.

I am more and more pleased with a solitary life; and though in a way of self-denial I could submit to the most public life for the service of God, yet I must confess it is much more pleasing to myself to be retired from the world, and to have very little to do with men, and to converse with God and conscience and good books.

Were the readers of Baxter's works asked to name what is their most striking characteristic, most would probably answer: The earnestness, the sincerity which pervades them. His whole soul is in what he writes. He is so possessed with the importance of the truth which he enforces, that he is somewhat negligent of the manner in which he enforces it. Living, as he continually did, on the brink of the grave, he spoke and wrote with the overpowering solemnity of one who uses the brief moments at his disposal hurriedly to utter what he believes will be for the benefit of those whom he leaves behind. He was the author of the famous couplet—

I preached as never sure to preach again,
And as a dying man to dying men.

The same thought frequently occurs in his prose works, and it exactly describes the character alike of his preaching and of his writing. This intensity of conviction was in his earlier days accompanied by a spirit of intolerance towards those who differed from him; in his later days, as we have heard him confess, his views were marvellously broadened, but his earnestness for the deliverance of men from sin remained with him unabated to the end.

What were the main lessons which this burning earnestness, fed with the fuel of charity, sought to impress upon the minds of men? The love of God in Christ, the joy of union with Him, the horror of separation from Him, lay at the root of all Baxter's teaching; but there were several other truths to which we may almost be surprised to find that he gave special prominence.

He was, for example, strenuous in maintaining the need of a reasonable faith. He was altogether opposed to the idea that there was any conflict between knowledge and piety. He "abhorred the folly of those unlearned persons who reviled or despised learning, because they knew not what it was," and "he took not any piece of true learning to be useless." He urged the duty of inquiry, and at times expressed a sympathy with "honest doubt," which many people suppose to be peculiar to our nineteenth century. "My certainty that I am a man is before my certainty that there is a God; my certainty that there is a God is greater than my certainty that He requireth love and holiness of His creatures; my certainty of the Deity is greater than my certainty of the Christian Faith; my certainty of the Christian Faith in its essentials is greater than my certainty of the perfection and infallibility of all the Holy Scriptures." The wisdom

and moderation with which he had come to see that scepticism must be met, would not be at all palatable even to a considerable section of good people to-day.

Another theme on which Baxter was never weary of descanting was the Evil of Dissension. "Richard Baxter, who, in a stormy and divided time, advocated unity and comprehension," is the inscription on his monument at Kidderminster. And there is justification for seizing on this as almost the great object of his life. His controversies were innumerable; he had very decided antipathies; he said very hard things about Papists, and Anabaptists and Quakers. Still the reason which impelled him to denounce them was chiefly the fact that they were in different ways obstacles to union. Whether his language was always calculated to bring about the unity for which he longed may be doubtful, but there is no doubt that it was for unity he longed. The title-page of his *Catholic Theology* is as follows: "Catholic Theology, plain, pure, and peaceable; for pacifying of the dogmatical word-warriors, who, by contending about things unrevealed, or not understood, and by putting verbal differences for real, and their arbitrary notions for necessary saved truths, deceived and deceiving, have long been the shame of the Christian religion, a scandal and hardening to unbelievers, the incendiaries, dividers, and distracters of the Church, the subverters of their own souls, and those of their followers, calling them to a blind zeal and wrathful warfare against true piety, love, and peace, and teaching them to censure, backbite, slander, and prate against each other, for things which they never understood." This portrait of the dogmatical word-warriors was probably drawn from life; but probably also it would not exercise a soothing influence upon those before whom it was held up. Nevertheless, under its impatient words, we discern the loving spirit which would fain reconcile men to one another by

making them see how trifling were the points about which they wrangled. As the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments became more and more the subject of his private meditation, so also it was on some such basis that he looked for the reunion of Christendom, assured that "the difficulty of reconciling and uniting Christians lies not first in finding out the terms, but in making men fit to receive and practise the terms from the beginning received by the Churches."

A large proportion of his works is devoted to combating the error which seems so apt to arise in times of religious excitement; the error of supposing that all is done when a man believes himself "converted." "Think not that all is done when once you are converted; but remember that the work of your Christianity then comes in and must be as long as the time of your living. Why came we into the vineyard of Christ but to work? and why came we into the army of Christ but to fight? and why came we into the race but to run for the prize? or why turned we into the right way but to travel in it? Think not to have done your care and work till you have done your lives."

Another feature of his writings is the frequency with which he enforces the duty of meditation, of retirement, of studying the Bible and good books of all kinds; of musing upon them in solitude till their truths become absorbed in the mind. And yet in enforcing a duty which he had felt to be so great a pleasure and help to himself, and the neglect, voluntarily or involuntarily, of which he knew to be so great a deprivation to many, he indulged in no extravagance. With what wholesome common sense he concludes his *Divine Life: or Conversing with God in Solitude*:—

I must conclude with this caution, which I have formerly also published, that it is not melancholy or weak-headed persons who are not able to bear such exercises for whom I have written these

directions. Those that are not able to be much in serious, solitary thoughtfulness, without confusion, must set themselves for the most part to those duties which are to be done in company by the help of others; for to them it is no duty. . . . To such persons it must suffice that they be brief in secret prayer, and take up with such occasional abrupt meditations as they are capable of.

The constancy with which his mind turned heavenward is remarkable, even in religious manuals. The Everlasting Rest was never far absent from his thoughts. To despise earth was easy, but not so easy to be conversant with heaven. "I find that it is comparatively very easy to me to be loose from this world, but hard to live by faith alone. To despise earth is easy to me, but not so easy to be acquainted and conversant in heaven. I have nothing in this world which I could not easily let go, but to get satisfying apprehensions of the other world is the great and grievous difficulty." This passage, striking in itself, becomes more interesting when we remember that Wordsworth, with little alteration, interwove it into the *Excursion*.

But for one whose thoughts were occupied so much with the future, who so habitually dwelt on the life to come, it is remarkable how he avoids mystical speculation, and vigorously confines himself to practical duty. His way of viewing the present and the future, the temporal and the eternal, is summed up in the hymn which we may call his Psalm of Life: "Lord, it belongs not to my care whether I die or live"; the last words of which may be taken as the expression of his faith and hope—

My knowledge of that life is small,
The eye of faith is dim;
But 'tis enough that Christ knows all,
And I shall be with Him.

CHAPTER XIII

JOHN BUNYAN

1628–1688

Next to the Bible, no book has so wide a circulation in English-speaking countries as *The Pilgrim's Progress*, and no religious author is dearer to the heart of the people than John Bunyan. It is not only that his book is fascinating, but that he himself is personally beloved. Although his genius was so essentially dramatic that he speaks through a multitude of characters, he yet so reveals himself in all his writings that he stands before us one of the most familiar of figures. He has disclosed the conflict of his own soul and of all earnest souls in a manner which has never been surpassed.

John Bunyan was born at Elstow, near Bedford, in the year 1628. His father was a tinker or brazier. "For my descent then, it was, as is well known by many, of a low and inconsiderable generation, my father having been of that rank that is meanest and most despised of all the families of the land." It is, however, only fair to remember that the family of Bunyan had been settled at Elstow for generations, and were apparently held in good repute, and Bunyan's parents were wise enough and able enough to obtain for him the rudiments of education. "Notwithstanding the meanness and inconsiderableness of my parents, it pleased God to put it into their hearts to put me to school to learn both to read and write, with which I also attained according to the rate of other poor men's children." Still the surroundings of his childhood were such as would have created incredulity in any one who was told that the

name of this boy would become one of the most famous in English literature.

His education at school was brief, and soon of necessity he took part in his father's trade. He had in early youth the sorrow to lose his mother and a sister. But whatever impression the sorrow made upon him, it was transient, and he led a thoughtless life. The language in which he speaks of himself appears exaggerated to those who are ignorant of the reality of spiritual conflict. They have considered the portrait which he has painted of himself as utterly blackened and distorted. They have seen nothing in his career to warrant his use of such self-reproachful terms, and have been inclined to treat the whole story of those dark days as a hallucination. What about robbing orchards, or swearing? they ask. These things were done by the young men of that time, and especially by those of Bunyan's rank, without compunction, without any thought of harm; and that he should so grieve over such words and deeds arose mainly from unusual morbidity. Bunyan looked beneath the surface. Compared with others, his life may have been blameless; but he did not compare it with that of others. A higher ideal had come before his soul. He looked at his life in the light of the Law of God, and the vision filled him with dismay; he saw himself so imperfect, so sinful. Testing his conduct, not by conventional standards, but by the standard of the All Holy, he felt himself in very truth the chief of sinners. His misery was increased by his attempts to be contented with the ordinary life of those around him. He tried to be deaf to the Voice which was calling him to higher things. He would fain enjoy the amusements which his companions enjoyed, but every now and again, by tormenting thoughts and terrifying dreams, he was a burden to himself.

In 1645 he served for a short time as a soldier. It

has been doubted whether he was in the Royalist or the Parliamentary army; and it is very singular that from his own writings it is impossible to solve the question. He was so absorbed in the spiritual phases through which he had passed, he was so persuaded of their infinite importance, that mere outward incidents seemed hardly worth the mentioning. Lord Macaulay took it for granted that he fought in the Parliamentary ranks. Mr. Froude thinks it more likely that, as it was a matter of levying, not of volunteering, he fought in the ranks of the Royalists. Weighing the evidence carefully, Dr. Brown of Bedford comes to the conclusion that Lord Macaulay was right, and that, in obedience to the behest of the Parliament, he gained the experience of military life which enabled him to give additional accuracy and vividness to various scenes and characters in *The Pilgrim's Progress* and *The Holy War*. On whichever side he was, a narrow escape which he made filled him afterwards with mingled shuddering and thanksgiving. "When I was a soldier, I, with others, was drawn out to go to such a place to besiege it; but when I was just ready to go, one of the company desired to go in my room; to which when I had consented, he took my place, and coming to the siege, as he stood sentinel, he was shot into the head with a musket bullet, and died."

He was married in the year 1649 when scarcely twenty-one. The name of his wife is altogether unknown, but her influence upon him was for good. "My mercy was to light upon a wife whose father was counted godly. This woman and I, though we came together as poor as poor might be, not having so much household stuff as a dish or spoon betwixt us both, yet this she had for her part, *The Plain Man's Pathway to Heaven*, and *The Practice of Piety*, which her father had left her when he died." Bunyan now became very regular in his attendance at

Church, and was seized with a superstitious reverence for sacred things. "I adored, and that with great devotion, even all things, both the high place, priest, clerk, vestment, service, and what else belonging to the Church, counting all things holy that were therein contained, and especially the priest and clerk most happy, and without doubt greatly blessed, because they were the servants, as I then thought, of God, and were principal in the holy temple to do His work therein."

He was once more plunged into great despondency. He looked in every direction for relief, but could find none. He thought if he could prove himself to be of Israelitish origin it would be well with him. He fancied that he had committed the unpardonable sin, and a very foolish, though aged, person from whom he sought consolation, gravely answered, "I think you have." "Here, therefore, I had but cold comfort; but talking a little more with him, I found him, though a good man, a stranger to much combat with the devil. Wherefore I went to God again, as well as I could, for mercy still." Bunyan was to continue to be no stranger to combat. He had to fight against all manner of temptations to unbelief and blasphemy. Yet all the while he trembled at the thought of death and judgment; and bell-ringing and other innocent recreations, though persisted in, were regarded as sins.

Stimulated by overhearing some poor women speak of the joy which they had in their faith, he aspired to have the same, and thought to prove his faith by working miracles. Glimpses of peace were granted to him at times. "One day," for example, "after I had been so many weeks oppressed and cast down therewith, as I was now quite giving up the ghost of all my hopes of ever attaining life, that sentence fell with weight upon my spirit: 'Look at the generations of old and see; did ever

any trust in the Lord, and was confounded?'" For that verse he searched the Bible from Genesis to Revelation in vain; and it was not till after the lapse of a year that he accidentally discovered it in the Apocryphal Book of Ecclesiasticus. "This," he says with touching simplicity, "at first did somewhat daunt me, but because by this time I had got more experience of the love and kindness of God, it troubled me the less; especially when I considered that though it was not in those texts which are called holy and canonical, yet forasmuch as this sentence was the sum and substance of the promises, it was my duty to take the comfort of it; and I bless God for that word, for it was of God to me; that word doth still, at times, shine before my face."

So, after "many a sorrow, many a labour, many a tear," he arrived at settled convictions, and the peace which passeth understanding. There was a congregation at Bedford to which he was led to attach himself. In this congregation baptism was an open question. The minister was John Gifford, who had at one time been a major in the Royalist army. He had been a reckless, irreligious man, but he led, after his conversion, a steady, consistent life to the end. Amid the curious confusions of the time, when the ecclesiastical conditions of the country were for a few years different from what they ever were before or have ever been since, Gifford, Congregationalist and Baptist though he was, received from the Corporation the presentation of the living, which had become vacant by the death of the rector. Gifford was a man of vigour, and even at the present day a letter, which Southey describes as "wise, tolerant, and truly Christian," is annually read in the congregation which he founded. This letter was written on his death-bed, and contained his parting instructions. He counsels his flock to keep together after he is gone, for they are

not "joined to the ministry, but to Christ and the Church." He warns them against divisions. "Concerning separation from the Church about baptism, laying on of hands, anointing with oil, psalms, or any externals, I charge every one of you respectively, as you will give an account of it to our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge both quick and dead at His coming, that none of you be found guilty of this great evil." And commending the congregation to God, and signing the letter with his own hand, John Gifford departed.

In the congregation of this remarkable man Bunyan occupied a prominent place. He was a deacon, and was, after a time, asked to preach in various places. It was with unfeigned reluctance that he consented to address meetings. His powers were, however, so marked that he was soon in such request as a preacher that he had to relinquish his duties as deacon. The intense earnestness and reality of his words made a profound impression wherever he went. "I went myself in chains to preach to them in chains, and carried that fire in my own conscience that I persuaded them to beware of."

Nor was it only by speaking but by writing that he sought to win men to Christ. His first book was published in the year 1656, and was entitled *Some Gospel Truths Opened*. It was of a controversial nature, and was directed against the Quakers. Edward Burroughs, a Quaker of note and ability, defended their doctrine, and the contest between these excellent men grew very hot. But although Bunyan was so zealous against one set of Nonconformists, his own opinions and actions were equally unpalatable to the ecclesiastical authorities after the Restoration. He was attacked by clergymen for his assumption of the teaching office, and was constantly jeered at as a tinker.

At length, as he did not attend the parish church,

and as meetings for worship such as he conducted were declared illegal, he was, at the instance of Mr. Francis Wingate, a neighbouring magistrate, arrested as he was about to address a company of people assembled in a private house at Lower Samsell. He has told, with considerable detail, the story of his interview with his judges. The law was an unrighteous law, and some of those before whom he was brought were prejudiced and unreasonable. Still it is just to observe that, on the whole, there was an evident desire to deal leniently with him. As, however, he could not in conscience accede to what they in law were bound to demand, his trial could have only one termination, and he was sentenced to imprisonment. To a man of his active temperament and affectionate disposition, it was a terrible hardship. "The parting with my wife and poor children hath oft been to me in this place as the pulling the flesh from my bones, and that not only because I am somewhat too fond of these great mercies, but also because I should have often brought to my mind the many hardships, miseries, and wants that my poor family was like to meet with should I be taken from them; especially my poor blind child, who lay nearer my heart than all I had besides. Poor child, thought I, what sorrow art thou like to have for thy portion in this world? Thou must be beaten, must beg, suffer hunger, cold, nakedness, and a thousand calamities, though I cannot now endure the wind to blow upon thee. . . . O, I said, in this condition I was as a man who was pulling down his house upon the head of his wife and children; yet, thought I, I must do it, I must do it."

His second wife, a noble woman, made many efforts to obtain his release, but in vain. When Charles II. was crowned, an act of forgiveness was proclaimed to multitudes of prisoners, but Bunyan was not allowed to escape. Barabbas was set at liberty, but the humble disciple of

Christ had to remain. His imprisonment lasted about twelve years. He appears to have had a certain amount of liberty; he saw friends from time to time; he was occasionally allowed to leave the prison walls; he made a living by making and selling long-tagged laces; and he spent much time in writing. It was not, however, during these twelve years that he wrote *The Pilgrim's Progress*. The works which were the outcome of this imprisonment were: *Profitable Meditations*, *Praying in Spirit*, *Christian Behaviour*, and *Grace Abounding*. His library in prison consisted almost solely of two books —the Bible and Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*.

On the 8th of May 1672, when he was forty-four years of age, Bunyan was set free. This was in consequence of a Declaration of Indulgence intended by the King to benefit Roman Catholics, but as they could hardly be tolerated without tolerating others who did not belong to the Church of England, all Nonconformists were included in the Declaration. It is no matter for surprise that the congregation of which he had been a member, and which had for some years been without a pastor, insisted on his accepting the office. And so far did his influence extend, so frequently did he preach elsewhere, that he was popularly called Bishop Bunyan.

After three years of liberty he was once more in prison, in consequence of another Test Act which was aimed especially at Roman Catholics, but in its working included all Nonconformists from the Church of England. Previously he had been in the county gaol at Bedford. This time he was in the small and miserable town gaol on Bedford Bridge; and it was during this imprisonment, which lasted only six months, that he began *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Internal evidence seems to prove that in prison he wrote as far as the parting of Christian and Hopeful with the Shepherds on the Delectable Mountains,

and that he completed Part I. after his release. This first edition did not contain some passages which are now among the most memorable in the volume, *e.g.* there is nothing about Mr. Worldly Wiseman; Christian's discourse with Charity at the Palace Beautiful; Mr. Byends; Diffidence, the wife of Giant Despair; or the pilgrims being met on the farther side of the river by the King's trumpeters in white and shining raiment. Bunyan's final release was obtained by the intervention of Dr. Barlow, Bishop of Lincoln. The rest of his days were spent in comparative peace. He was never weary in his labours to extend the kingdom of God. He wrote *The Life and Death of Mr. Badman*, as a kind of companion and contrast to the Pilgrimage of Christian. He wrote *The Holy War*, the Second Part of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, and a number of works of less importance, though some of them, such as *The Jerusalem Sinner Saved*, contain passages of great power and beauty. His reputation always increased. "When Mr. Bunyan preached in London," says a contemporary, "if there were but one day's notice given, there would be more people come together to hear him preach than the meeting-house could hold. I have seen to hear him preach, by my computation, about twelve hundred at a morning lecture by seven o'clock on a working-day, in the dark winter-time. I also computed about three thousand that came to hear him one Lord's Day at London, at a town's end meeting-house, so that half were fain to go back again for want of room, and then himself was fain at a back door to be pulled almost over people to get upstairs to his pulpit."

Bunyan's death was worthy of his life. He caught his fatal illness in a work of reconciliation. He went round by Reading, on his way to London, in August 1688, in order to make peace between a father and son

who had become estranged. This mission accomplished, he set off for London, and rode the forty miles through drenching rain. He was still able to preach once or twice, and to see his publisher about a treatise on the Fifty-first Psalm, but he never recovered from the chill with which he had been struck on that dreary ride. On the 31st August 1688, at the house of John Stradwick, Grocer, Snowhill, his earthly pilgrimage was ended.

What has given the writings of Bunyan their peculiar charm? He wrote with great directness and simplicity. Nobody can ever be at a loss to understand what he means. The common people have always heard him gladly; but as it is human nature which he unveils, there is no class, educated or uneducated, to which he does not appeal.

He wrote out of a full heart. His works are the simple expression of his honest, unaffected nature. He simply describes what he has seen and known. The profoundest passages, which betray such a marvellous acquaintance with the intricacies of the spiritual life, and which have hardly any parallel, unless it be the seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, are merely the record of his own experience. His dramatic power is almost unsurpassed. The picture gallery which he has provided for the benefit of the world contains innumerable portraits, and they are in the most natural manner distinguishable from each other.

He was, with whatever limitations of Puritanism, of a large and Catholic heart. All sections of Christendom have been able to use his greatest allegory, and have found in it the statement of their own deepest needs and faith. "You ask me," he once wrote, "how long is it since I was a Baptist? I must tell you I know none to whom that title is so proper as to the disciples of John. And since you would know by what name I would be

distinguished from others, I tell you I would be, and hope I am, a Christian, and choose, if God should count me worthy, to be called a Christian, a believer, or other such name as is approved by the Holy Ghost. And as for those titles of Anabaptists, Independents, Presbyterians, or the like, I conclude that they come neither from Jerusalem nor Antioch, but rather from hell and Babylon, for they naturally tend to division. You may know them by their fruits." He was at one time most severe in his censure of all who would use a book of Common Prayer; in later days he had come to acknowledge that the abandonment of a form of prayer was no security for the attainment of its spirit.

He had great dread of that style of teaching which tells people they have nothing to do but believe; that once they turn to God all is plain afterwards. With what truth, with what exquisite sympathy, is this theory refuted in *The Pilgrim's Progress*. What conflicts, what sorrows, what temptations, await Christian after he has left the City of Destruction, after he has met Evangelist, after he has been through the Valley of the Shadow of Death. What a variety of characters, who, destitute of assurance, are yet genuine believers, and who yet have to plod wearily on in depression: Mr. Fearing, Feeble-Mind, Ready to Halt. With what humour and sarcasm has he shown the necessity of reality, in the characters, for example, of the hypocritical Byends, and of the chattering, superficial Talkative. "Religion hath no place in his heart or house or conversation; all he hath lieth in his tongue, and his religion is to make a noise therewith."

Bunyan was not a learned theologian or apologist. He may not help the perplexed amid critical or scientific difficulties. He belonged to the seventeenth century, not to the twentieth. But still and for ever more, his

books will appeal to the minds of men; for, with whatever traces of the dialect of his own day and his own school, he is occupied with truths which are universal and eternal; he is commending not so much any special aspect of opinion as Him who is the great object of all Christian teaching, Him who is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever. The Holy War, of which Bunyan has written, is a war from which none of us can obtain a discharge. The Grace Abounding, which he gratefully extolled, is the grace to which we have all to trust. And the Pilgrimage which was taken by Christian and Faithful and Hopeful, Christiana and Mercy, is the pilgrimage which, according to one or other of these models, must be taken by us all.

CHAPTER XIV

GEORGE FOX

1624–1690

In religious autobiography a unique place is occupied by *A Journal or Historical Account of the Life, Travels, Sufferings, Christian Experiences, and Labour of Love in the Work of the Ministry, of that Ancient, Eminent, and Faithful Servant of Jesus Christ, George Fox, who Departed this Life in Great Peace with the Lord, the thirteenth day of the eleventh month* 1690.

The founder of the Society of Friends was born at Drayton, Leicestershire, in July 1624. His father was a weaver, "an honest man, and there was a seed of God in him." From his earliest years Fox was grave and staid in his behaviour, and it was intended that he should be a clergyman. Other counsels prevailed, and

he was apprenticed to a shoemaker, who was also a dealer in wool, and a cattle-grazier. When he was about nineteen years of age, happening one day to be in the company of some young men who were noisily drinking each other's health, great depression came upon him, and a voice said to his heart, "Thou seest how young people come together unto vanity, and old people unto the earth, and thou must forsake all, both young and old, and get out of all, and be as a stranger unto all."

But although he left his relations, and "brake off all familiarity or fellowship with old or young," he did not find the peace which he sought. He went from place to place asking the advice of ministers both of the Church of England and of other Communions, but miserable comforters were they all, and he was driven almost to despair. "My troubles continued, and I was often under great temptations, and I fasted much and walked abroad in solitary places many days; and often took my Bible and went and sat in hollow trees and lonesome places till night came on; and frequently in the night walked mournfully about by myself. For I was a man of sorrows in the times of the first workings of the Lord in me."

He ceased to attend any place of worship. "I saw that being bred at Oxford or Cambridge did not qualify or fit a man to be a minister of Christ, and what then should I follow such for? So neither they nor any of the Dissenting people could I join with, but was as a stranger to all, relying wholly upon the Lord Jesus Christ." "When all my hopes in them and in all men was gone, so that I had nothing outwardly to help me, nor could tell what to do, then, oh, then I heard a voice which said: 'There is one, even Christ Jesus, that can speak to thy condition,' and when I heard it my heart did leap for joy."

Much has been said of the singular clothing of leather which about this time he adopted. "Perhaps the most remarkable incident in modern history," says Teufelsdröckh, "is not the Diet of Worms, still less the Battle of Austerlitz, Waterloo, Peterloo, or any other battle; but an incident passed carelessly over by most historians, and treated with some degree of ridicule by others, namely, George Fox's making to himself a suit of leather." The only apparent reference which Fox himself makes to his attire is that it struck terror into the hearts of some when it was told them "The man in leathern breeches is come," and they would hasten to get out of his way.

He believed that he was raised up to restore primitive Christianity, which had fallen into abeyance in all religious communions, and in all classes of society. "Moreover, when the Lord sent me forth into the world, He forbad me to put off my hat to any, high or low, and I was required to 'thee' and 'thou' all men and women, without any respect to rich or poor, great or small, and as I travelled up and down, I was not to bid people 'good-morrow' or 'good-even'; neither might I bow or scrape with my leg to any one; and this made the sects and professions to rage."

He was firmly persuaded that clergymen were hirelings, but lawyers and physicians, judges and magistrates, schoolmasters and schoolmistresses, singers and players on instruments, star-gazers and mountebanks, and shopkeepers, were all about as bad as the priests. He had no scruple in interrupting the devotions of worshippers and the sermons of preachers. It is often an occasion of astonishment that the Quakers, so mild and inoffensive in their doctrines and life, should have been the object of such relentless animosity and persecution. An explanation may be found in the behaviour of George Fox. Simple

and sincere as we know him to have been, we can hardly be surprised that the people of his own day were greatly irritated by his actions. Apostle of peace and goodwill though he was, he showed himself to his contemporaries almost solely as a man of contention. His tongue, if not his hand, was against every man. He came into collision with all sorts and conditions of men, and he used the language of unsparing denunciation. Refusing to employ physical force in promulgating religious opinions, he was intolerant in thought and expression towards all who differed from him. He was not unnaturally taken for an impersonation of bigotry rather than for an advocate of liberty.

It was in keeping with the spirit of the times that he should be accused of sorcery. It was said that "I carried bottles about with me and made people drink of my bottles, and that made them follow me; and that I rode upon a great black horse, and was seen in one country upon my black horse in one hour, and in the same hour in another country threescore miles off; and that I should give a fellow money to follow me when I was on my black horse." He believed that he had skill in detecting the presence of witchcraft. "As I was going to a meeting, I saw some women in a field, and I discerned them to be witches. And I was moved to go out of my way into the field to them, and declare unto them their conditions, telling them plainly they were in the spirit of witchcraft."

Hated, misconstrued, persecuted under the Commonwealth and under the Restoration, he pursued his way, declaring the truths which had been revealed to him, and ever gaining followers. Thrown into prison, sent to a madhouse, stoned by the populace, he supported with admirable serenity all kinds of persecution and let nothing intimidate him. He fared no better in Scotland

than in England. "The Scots being a dark, carnal people, gave little heed, nor hardly took notice what was said." And at Glasgow "not one of the town" came to his meeting. Yet on the whole he was more hopeful of Scotland than of England, and he made numerous converts at Aberdeen and Elgin. He spent two years in America and the West Indies. He travelled in Holland and Germany; his correspondence was immense. In addition to the numerous private persons of all ranks whom he addressed, he wrote to Oliver Cromwell regarding the fortunes of Friends in Ireland as well as in Great Britain, and warning Cromwell against thinking of the Crown. In prison he addressed a letter to King Charles II. on the principles of the Quakers. He wrote letters to the King of Denmark and the Duke of Holstein on behalf of "Friends that were sufferers in their dominions." He addressed a remonstrance to John III., King of Poland, in behalf of Friends at Dantzic. "Is it not a shame to Christendom," he said, "among the Turks and others, that one Christian should persecute another for the doctrine of faith, worship and religion? . . . Now would not the King and the magistrates of Dantzic have thought it was contrary to their consciences if they should be forced by the Turk to his religion? Would it not in like manner seem hard to the magistrates of Dantzic, and contrary to their consciences, if they should be forced to the religion of the King of Poland? Or the King of Poland, if he should be compelled to the religion of the magistrates of Dantzic? Therefore, we beseech the King, with all Christian humility, and the magistrates of Dantzic, that they would order their proceedings in this matter according to the royal law of God, which is to do unto others as they would have others do unto them, and to love their neighbours as themselves."

His last letter was addressed to Friends in Ireland,

and is the conclusion of his Journal. This letter was written on November 10, 1690. The next day he preached at the meeting in Gracechurch Street, but was immediately afterwards attacked by illness. "Divers friends came to visit him in his illness, unto some of whom he said, 'All is well. The seed of God runs over all, and over death itself. And though (said he) I am weak in body, yet the power of God is over all, and the seed runs over all disorderly spirits.' Thus lying in a heavenly frame of mind, his spirit wholly exercised towards the Lord, he grew weaker and weaker in his natural strength, and on the third day of that week, between the hours of 9 and 10 of the evening, he quietly departed this life in peace, and sweetly fell asleep in the Lord, whose blessed truth he had livingly and powerfully preached in the meeting but two days before. Thus ended he his days in his faithful testimony in perfect love and unity with his brethren, and in peace and good-will to all men, on the 13th day of the 11th month, 1690, being then in the sixty-seventh year of his age."

He was buried in Bunhill Fields, where two years before the remains of his great contemporary, the author of that other remarkable autobiography *Grace Abounding*, had been laid to rest.

It is somewhat difficult to estimate impartially the writings and the career of Fox. From the point of view of Lord Macaulay, his writings are absolute nonsense, and he was personally a mixture of a madman and a charlatan. "If we form our judgment of George Fox simply by looking at his own actions and writings, we shall see no reason for placing him morally or intellectually above Ludowick Muggleton or Joanna Southcote;" and this judgment is superficially correct. His superstition, his narrowness, his credulity, his ignorance, must be admitted. But this must not blind us to the insight,

the enlightenment, the elevation, the shrewdness, the comprehensiveness, the universal charity of his teaching. Whether right or wrong in his opinions, he was altogether sincere. It was not simply that men like Robert Barclay or William Penn were willing to acknowledge him as master, but that some of the principles which he advocated, and which at the time were treated with particular derision, have become universally accepted. No religious body in proportion to its members has been more devout, more enlightened, more philanthropic than the Quakers. "Their systems of registration, poor relief, education, and self-help" have made them "a real social power." Macaulay, who classes Fox with Ludowick Muggleton or Joanna Southcote, adds that it would be most unjust to rank the sect which regards him as its founder with the Muggletonians or the Southcotians, but it is with Fox and not with the Quakers that we have to do. And it is only fair to say that the principles for which the Quakers contended, the blamelessness of their lives, the simplicity, the patience for which they are admired throughout Christendom, are conspicuous in the life and writings of their founder. Admitting to the full the credulity and the personal eccentricities which his Journal reveals, we must admit also that it is of great literary value as a study of character and a picture of the period in which he lived; and of great religious value as the genuine utterance of a man in habitual communion with the Unseen and the Eternal. If for nothing else, his Journal would be memorable as the record of his vision: "I saw also that there was an ocean of darkness and death, but an infinite ocean of light and love which flowed over the ocean of darkness."

CHAPTER XV

RICHARD SIBBES — FRANCIS QUARLES — JOHN HALES— WILLIAM CHILLINGWORTH—"THE WHOLE DUTY OF MAN"

1577–1656

I. The reign of Charles I. was a period prolific in religious literature. Several of the writers of that time have already passed before us in review. Amongst others whose writings are found helpful by some to this hour there occurs the name of Richard Sibbes. Sibbes has been called the English Leighton, and there was in Sibbes the same longing for peace, the same readiness to accommodate himself on unessential points to the authority of others, which distinguished the good archbishop. Sibbes was a Puritan, but men of all schools thought of him with tenderness and respect. He suffered somewhat on account of his views, but not so severely as many of his brethren. And when he was, by persecution, deprived of one method of support, another was, by the kindness of the well-disposed, provided for him. He lost a Lectureship and Fellowship at Cambridge in 1615, but he was immediately appointed preacher at Gray's Inn; and in 1626 he became Master of Catherine Hall, Cambridge. Suspected by Archbishop Laud, he was nevertheless allowed to pursue his course in comparative peace, and in 1633 he was appointed Vicar of Trinity Church. He died in 1635, aged fifty-seven.

He wrote many books, some of them with strange titles. His two best known are probably *The Bruised Reed and Smoking Flax* and *The Soul's Conflict*. It was to the perusal of *The Bruised Reed* that Richard

Baxter attributed his conversion. Isaak Walton wrote in his will: "To my son Isaak I give Doctor Sibbes his *Soul's Conflict*, and to my daughter his *Bruised Reed*, desiring them to read them so as to be well acquainted with them."

"Of this blest man," wrote Dr. Doddridge on his copy of another of Sibbes's works—

> Let this just praise be given
> Heaven was in him before he was in heaven.

Dr. A. K. H. Boyd has told us in our own day with what interest after a lengthened period he re-read Sibbes's *Soul's Conflict*. "Here is a book not to sit down and read, but to kneel down and use. And oh, the sharp clear bits of intuition into truth, and the discernment of your nature and mine. These things are startling. You will find that the writer of such pages knew you, perhaps, better than you knew yourself. Ay, Richard Sibbes, who departed from Gray's Inn on that Sunday in July 1635, knew, in a somewhat awful fashion, what the present writer was to feel and to find out between September 1853 and September 1892. Let us part from him with the lines of Quarles—

> Let me stand silent then. O may that Spirit
> Which led thine hand, direct mine eye, my breast;
> That I may read, and do; and so inhabit
> (What thou enjoy'st and taught'st) eternal rest."

II. Francis Quarles, from whom these lines in praise of Sibbes are taken, was born in 1592 and died in 1644. He was at one time cup-bearer to Elizabeth, Queen of Bohemia, and at another time private secretary to Archbishop Ussher. On the outbreak of disturbances in Ireland he fled to England. His loyalty to Charles I. exposed him to great calamities. His estates were

confiscated by the Parliamentary party; he lost all his books, and the manuscripts of various volumes which he was on the point of publishing were ruthlessly destroyed. His grief for this loss was so great that he completely sank under it. The shock sent him to bed, from which he never rose.

The work by which his memory is preserved is his *Emblems Divine and Moral, together with Hieroglyphics of the Life of Man*, full of quaint and fantastic conceits indeed, yet with gleams of poetical genius and spiritual insight. The *Emblems* were adorned by illustrations as quaint and far-fetched as the text; and the circulation of the volume was by some attributed rather to the skill of the artists than to the power of the author. Thus Pope refers in the *Dunciad* to books

> Where the pictures for the page atone,
> And Quarles is saved by beauties not his own.

This, however, is true only to a limited extent. It is to the page as much as to the pictures that the book owes its preservation. As a specimen, one of the Emblems "represents a heavenly globe at the top of a hill. A man is painfully riding up to it on an ass, so slowly that he is outstripped by a snail, and looking back the while to the terrestrial world below, towards which another rider, mounted on a stag, is stirring at full speed." The poem accompanying the picture says—

> Lord, when we leave the world and come to Thee,
> How dull, how slug are we;
> How backward, how preposterous is the motion
> Of our ungain devotion.
> When our dull souls direct a thought to Thee
> As slow as snails are we.
> But at the earth we dart our winged desire,
> We burn, we burn like fire. . . .

Not fire nor rocks can stop our furious minds
Nor waves nor winds.
How fast and fearless do our footsteps flee!
The lightfoot roebuck's not so swift as we.

III. A writer whose opinions and character, even more than his writings, have caused his memory to be revived in late years, was John Hales of Eton, the Ever-memorable John Hales, as he was fondly styled by his admirers. There were few to share the views which he expressed. "Theologically he was one of the most isolated men of his generation, personally he was one of the most popular." He was a Royalist, and suffered for his loyalty. Like Quarles, he underwent that sad loss to a student, the loss of his library; but, unlike Quarles, he bore the loss with equanimity. He was the reverse of a High Churchman, yet he was promoted by Archbishop Laud; he was the advocate of liberty, yet he was driven from his living by Cromwell. This singularity of position it was which made him misunderstood in his own day, which makes him specially interesting now. He was scrupulously fair, seeking to see the good in all parties, and to make all at one; consequently he stood outside all parties, and was supported by none, although the charm of his lofty character influenced all who came in contact with him, and constrained the respect of his strongest opponents. "One of the least men in the kingdom, and one of the greatest scholars in Europe," as Lord Clarendon called him, he was so sincerely striving for peace as almost to disarm enmity.

He was born in 1584, was educated at Oxford, became a Fellow of Eton in 1613, was made Canon of Windsor in 1639, was ejected by Cromwell, and died in 1656, ending his days under the roof of a humble cottager, the widow of a former servant. He was present, though not as a delegate, at the Synod of Dort, in 1618. The

result of that Synod was the emphatic acceptance of Calvinism, but on Hales the effect was different. He had gone as a Calvinist, but the manner in which the controversy was conducted repelled him, and led him, as he said, "to bid John Calvin good-night." But though he was no longer to be ranked as a Calvinist, he could hardly be ranked as an Arminian. "If he bade John Calvin good-night," Principal Tulloch said, "he did not say good-morning to Arminius." He remained to the end in a remarkable degree the member of no definite school or party, seeking after the things which make for peace. He was decidedly opposed to any notion of Episcopacy being the only divine rule of Church government. "They do but abuse themselves and others that would persuade us that bishops by Christ's institution have any superiority over any other men, further than of reverence; or that any bishop is superior to another further than positive order, as agreed upon among Christians, hath prescribed." But he was equally averse to consider Presbytery or Independency as possessing divine right. Schism was the evil which he continually deplored, but he was wise and fair enough to see that the blame of the schism did not always lie with those who were called schismatics. He was not an ambitious man; he shrank from authorship, and during his lifetime he published scarcely anything except a treatise on Schism. His works, his Golden Remains, as they were termed, were mostly published after his death. The spirit of the man may be gathered from a prayer with which he concludes a sermon on the text, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you." "Look down, O Lord, upon thy poor dismembered Church, rent and torn with discords, and ever ready to sink. . . . Thou that wroughtest that great reconciliation between God and man, is Thine arm waxen shorter? Was it possible to

reconcile God to man? To reconcile man to man, is it impossible? Be with those, we beseech Thee, to whom the prosecution of Church controversies is committed, and, like a good Lazarus, drop one cooling drop into their tongues and pens, too much exasperated each against other. . . . Direct Thy Church, O Lord, in all her petitions for peace. Teach her wherein her peace consists, and warn her from the world, and bring her home to Thee; that all those that love Thy peace may at last have the reward of the sons of peace, and reign with Thee in Thy kingdom of peace for ever."

The weakness of his voice marred his success as a preacher. In a sermon preached at St. Paul's Cross, he begins with a quaintly pathetic reference to his infirmity: "Might it so have pleased God that I had in my power the choice of my ways, and the free management of my own actions, I had not this day been *seen* (for so I think I may better speak: *seen* may I be of many, but to be *heard* with any latitude and compass, my natural imperfection doth quite cut off); I had not, I say, in this place this day been seen; ambition of great and famous auditories I leave to those whose better gifts and inward endowments are admonitioners unto them of the great good they can do, or otherwise thirst after popular applause. Unto myself have I evermore applied that of St. Jerome, a small, a private, a retired auditory, better accords both with my will and my abilities. Those unto whose discretion the furniture of this place is committed, ought especially to be careful, since you come hither to hear, to provide you those who can be heard; for the neglect of this one circumstance, how poor soever it may seem to be, is no less than to offend against that 'faith which cometh by hearing'; and to prostrate, as much as in them is, that end for which alone these meetings were ordained."

IV. Another ardent seeker after truth, who also, strangely enough, owed much to the goodwill of Archbishop Laud, was William Chillingworth. He was born at Oxford in 1602; his father was Mayor of Oxford, and Dr. Laud was his godfather. At the University he distinguished himself as a ready controversialist. The marriage of Charles I. with Princess Henrietta Maria had directed attention to the claims of the Church of Rome. Chillingworth threw himself into the study of the subject with great ardour, and with the result that he left the Church of England. He went to Douay in order to be confirmed in his new faith, but closer acquaintance disenchanted him. He listened to the arguments and remonstrances which Dr. Laud addressed to him by letter, and finally he gave up the Church of Rome. In reply to one who wrote violently on account of his defection from the Roman Catholic Church, Chillingworth calmly and nobly replied: "I will call God to witness, who knows my heart better than you, that I have evened the scale of my judgment as much as possibly I could, and have not willingly allowed any one grain of worldly motives on either side, but have weighed the reasons for your religion and against, with such indifference as if there were nothing in the world but God and myself; and is it my fault that that scale goes down which hath the most weight in it? that that building falls which hath a false foundation?"

But although he had returned to the Church of England, he could not for a time subscribe the Thirty-nine Articles; hence to those who taunted him with seeking his own interests in this new change of opinion he was able to say: "How is it possible you should believe that I deserted your religion for ends and against the light of my conscience, out of a desire of preferment, and yet out of scruple of conscience should refuse to

subscribe the Thirty-nine Articles, *i.e.* refuse to enter at the only common door which here in England leads to preferment?"

A discussion as to the claims of the Church of Rome had been going on between a Church of England clergyman and a Jesuit. Chillingworth determined to take part in it. For two years or more he devoted himself to an elaborate examination and refutation of the Jesuit arguments, and in 1637 appeared *The Religion of Protestants a Safe Way to Salvation.* The method of this book is somewhat complicated, but this arises from the author's candour and fairness. He is so determined that his opponent shall not be misinterpreted that he prints the Jesuit's treatise, *Charity maintained by Catholics*, chapter by chapter, and then replies to it, patiently pursuing every argument and inference to its close. This undoubtedly interferes with the compactness and liveliness of the work, although there are passages of remarkable force and point scattered throughout. The most famous sentence of the book, "The Bible, the Bible only, is the Religion of Protestants," has been strongly controverted, but he used the words in a much broader sense than that in which they are commonly cited. His work met with the approval both of Archbishop Laud and of the king, although there was much in it which they must have regarded as questionable. The ardour with which he insisted on the right of private judgment could hardly meet with the unqualified approval of such advocates of authority. Chillingworth was, however, a Royalist by conviction, and the knowledge that he was distrusted by Puritans would palliate any supposed errors in his Church doctrine. Besides, there was a certain inconsistency in Chillingworth's position. He was in a sense a High Churchman, but he objected to the Athanasian Creed, and he rejoiced in the

name of Protestant; so it has come about that the book which ultra-Protestants now hold as the ablest vindication of their position was written by a High Churchman. It had the approval of Archbishop Laud, who is esteemed a martyr by that school which refuses to be called Protestant altogether, and it was denounced by the ultra-Protestants of the time as dangerous in the extreme—as combining all sorts of errors, Popish and Socinian. The manner in which the *Religion of Protestants* was treated by one who was a member of the Westminster Assembly of Divines would be incredible had it not been recorded as meritorious by the man himself. Chillingworth was taken prisoner at the siege of Arundel Castle, and, ill in health, was conveyed to Chichester. Here he was visited by the Westminster divine, Francis Cheynell, who had at least kindness enough to do what he could to alleviate the bodily sufferings of the sick prisoner. But he pestered him with continual arguments on the subject of doctrine and Church government. The unwillingness of Chillingworth to engage in argument, or to use harsh expressions of condemnation towards heretics, roused the great indignation of the intolerable polemic. "Sir, I said to him," writes Cheynell, "you have lavished so much charity upon Turks, Socinians, Papists, that I am afraid you have very little to spare for a truly reformed Protestant." Thus the author of the ablest treatise in the English language in defence of Protestantism was denounced on his deathbed as not a Protestant at all. And what took place after his death was more mournful, more ludicrous, more disgraceful still. There was actually a discussion as to whether he ought to be buried as a Christian, but it was at length agreed that he should be interred "among the old shavelings, monks, and priests of whom he had so good an opinion in his life." He was accordingly buried in the cloisters of Chichester Cathedral. "When

the malignants," writes Cheynell, "brought the hearse to the burial, I met them at the grave with Master Chillingworth's book in my hand, and when they laid him in the grave I threw the book into the grave along with him. Happy would it be for the kingdom if this book and all its fellows could be so buried. Get thee gone, thou cursed book, which hast seduced so many precious souls! Get thee gone, thou corrupt rotten book! Earth to earth and dust to dust! Get thee gone, that with thy author thou mayest see corruption."

So it is that champions of toleration are often regarded. The head and front of his offending was his charity. "By the religion of Protestants," so he said, "I do not understand the doctrine of Luther or Calvin or Melanchthon, nor the Confession of Augsburg or Geneva, nor the Catechism of Heidelberg, nor the Articles of the Church of England—no, nor the harmony of Protestant Confessions, but that wherein they all agree, and which they all subscribe with a greater harmony as a perfect rule of their faith and actions, *i.e.* the Bible." Chillingworth had to find, as many since have found, that loud declaimers for the Bible as the only standard may mean nothing more than their own interpretation of it.

V. In 1658 there was published a work entitled *The Whole Duty of Man, Laid down in a Plain and Familiar Way, for the Use of All, but especially the Meanest Reader; divided into* 17 *Chapters: one whereof being read every Lord's Day, the whole may be read over thrice in the Year: necessary for all Families: with Private Devotions for Several Occasions.* The book became immensely popular among those to whom the Puritan literature was distasteful, and was placed by them next to the Bible and Prayer-Book. Its practical teaching recommended it to many who did not belong to the Church of England. "It soon found its way into

France and Wales by means of translations, and was made a textbook for school-children on the one hand, and candidates for ordination on the other." The book was anonymous, and its authorship was attributed to many different persons. Lady Packington, Archbishop Frewen, Archbishop Sterne, Dr. Henry Hammond, are among the names which have been mentioned, but no amount of investigation has thrown any certain light on the subject. The reason why the author should have concealed his name was once discussed in Dr. Johnson's presence. "There may," said the sage, "be different reasons assigned for this, any one of which would be very sufficient. He may have been a clergyman, and may have thought that his religious counsels would have less weight when known to come from a man whose profession was theology. He may have been a man whose practice was not suitable to his principles, so that his character might injure the effect of his book, which he had written in a season of penitence. Or he may have been a man of rigid self-denial, so that he would have no reward for his pious labours while in this world, but refer it all to a future state."

Whether or not Dr. Johnson hit upon the reason, the authorship remains undiscovered at this hour. Like Jeremy Taylor's *Holy Living*, *The Whole Duty of Man* was based upon the words "that we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world," and was an attempt to unfold the duties which men owe to themselves, to their neighbour, and to God.

About fifty years afterwards a book entitled *The New Whole Duty of Man* was published, intended to give a statement of the motives which impel to a truly sober, righteous, and godly life, and which it was felt had been defectively stated in *The Whole Duty*. This book is hardly to be met with now, and from the standpoint of

the later Evangelicals it seems to have been worse than the work which it attempted to correct. *The New Whole Duty* was erroneous where *The Whole Duty* had been merely defective. It remained for Henry Venn to provide a work which should set forth the Christian life as animated by specifically Evangelical principles, and this he sought to do in *The Complete Duty of Man*. One is surprised to learn that in the opinion of another well-known Evangelical it did not quite attain its object, and must be acknowledged to be one-sided. In comparing the divinity of the nineteenth century with that of previous centuries, the Rev. Edward Bickersteth said in 1829: "There are three works, *The Whole Duty of Man*, published about the middle of the seventeenth century, *The New Whole Duty of Man*, published about fifty or sixty years after, and Venn's *Complete Duty of Man*, published on the revival of religion, which illustrate the character of the divinity of their respective eras. *The Whole Duty of Man* was a practical book, to counteract the Antinomians, and contains an impressive introduction on the care of the soul. The devotional part is full and useful, and it has a good statement of relative duties, but it does not exhibit prominently the only principles and strength on which men can perform them. *The New Whole Duty*, attempting to remedy this by bringing forward the faith as well as the duty of the Christian, has completely departed from the principles of the Reformation, and is a very dangerous and unsound book. . . . In Venn's *Complete Duty of Man* we return again to the principles of the Reformation. He exhibits clearly justification by faith, and the vital doctrines of the Gospel; but though doctrinally an improvement, yet it is defective as a complete substitute in the statement of practical duties."

The Complete Duty was originally published in fourteen

chapters; then these were divided so as to make fifty-two—one for every Sunday in the year. Then again, by a different arrangement, the chapters were reduced in number to forty. The style is rather stiff and devoid of illustration, so that one wonders more at the popularity which it once obtained than at the neglect into which it has now fallen. Sir James Stephen speaks of it as "one of those few books of which the benefits are never unfelt, of which the love never abates, and of which the republication is never long intermitted." As a matter of fact, *The Whole Duty of Man*, which it was intended to supersede, is now more read, and shows signs of increasing vitality. In the preface to a new edition the editor remarks, with somewhat malicious pleasure, "It was not a favourite with the Evangelical school of the eighteenth century, who tried to supplant it in popular esteem by a somewhat similar work, entitled *The Complete Duty of Man*, which, however, failed of its object." And even Bishop Ryle, who called *The Whole Duty* a "mischievous and defective volume," confessed that *The Complete Duty* hardly appealed to this generation.

CHAPTER XVI

JOHN HOWE—JOHN OWEN—ROBERT SOUTH—JOHN SCOTT—SIR THOMAS BROWNE—HENRY VAUGHAN

1616–1716

I. A Puritan who seems to have found his way into the hearts and affections of his contemporaries in a remarkable degree was John Howe. His style was, even in their judgment, occasionally rugged and obscure; but there was a sincerity, a spirituality, and a breadth of

charity, which so suffused all he wrote as to make his defects scarcely noticeable. His personal character and manner had about them a charm which fascinated all who came in contact with him. He rose to high favour during the Commonwealth, and was Chaplain to Oliver Cromwell. His influence he always used for the noblest purposes, and never for selfish ends. To secure pardon and toleration for those who were likely to suffer for their loyalty to the cause of the Monarchy, was an effort which he delighted to make. "You have obtained many favours for others," said Cromwell to him once; "I wonder when the time is to come that you will ask anything for yourself or your family." When the Commonwealth came to an end and Charles II. was restored, it was natural that Cromwell's Chaplain should suffer—and suffer he did; but for some years he was Chaplain to Viscount Massarene, at Antrim Castle, Ireland; and then for a time he took refuge in Utrecht, where he remained until the Revolution permitted him to return. He died in 1705, one of his last sayings being, "I expect my salvation, not as a profitable servant, but as a pardoned sinner."

His best known works are—*The Blessedness of the Righteous, The Redeemer's Tears over Lost Souls, The Living Temple, The Redeemer's Dominion over the Invisible World.* In his description of human nature as a temple in ruins, and in his conceptions of other worlds than ours, he forestalled some of the speculations of more modern writers. Robert Hall thought him the greatest of the Puritan divines.

II. This verdict might be challenged if we restrict the term "divine" to a theologian pure and simple. Possibly many would be inclined to maintain that as a theologian none of the Puritans was greater than John Owen. He was a very voluminous writer, and his style is prolix and ponderous, but he was very learned, and

was a fair and candid controversialist. Robert Hall, who admired Howe so much, could not bring himself to admire Owen. "I can't read Owen with any patience. I never read a page of Owen without finding some confusion in his thoughts, either a truism or a contradiction in terms. Sir, he is a double Dutchman, floundering in a continent of mud." This judgment, so expressed, is hardly to be taken seriously. His power, his knowledge, both secular and sacred, his acquaintance with the human heart, all entitle him to a high place among religious writers; although the inelegance of his style will deter many from reading him, who, if that obstacle were overcome, would find in him much not merely of intellectual suggestiveness, but of wonderfully subtle analysis of human nature.

Among his great works are—*A Discourse on the Work of the Holy Spirit*, an *Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*; but the criticism is just which says that his real greatness is rather seen in works where he is combating not so much "the errors of heretics as the corruption and deceitfulness of the human heart." In spite of its ungainly style and tiresome subdivisions, there are few works which, for purposes of self-examination and self-acquaintance, and for practical guidance in the conflict with besetting sins, will compare with Owen's *Mortification of Sin in Believers*. It does not lend itself readily to quotation, but those who study it will not go without reward.

He rose, like Howe, to high favour during the Commonwealth, and was Vice-Chancellor of the University of Oxford. After the Restoration he seems to have been comparatively unmolested, and to have ministered for a time to a congregation in London.

III. During the time that Owen was Vice-Chancellor of the University of Oxford, he acted with great moderation, forbidding all interference with the services held by

Episcopalians, and was, we are told, as much beloved by Episcopalians as by Independents. It is with some amusement that we hear of him administering rebuke to one young Episcopalian who seized an opportunity of publicly inveighing against Puritanism. The bold young man was no other than Robert South, afterwards so famous as a preacher. This was an eminently characteristic performance of his, for great as his sermons are in many ways, undoubtedly one of the most prominent features in them is the unmitigated abhorrence of Puritanism which they show. He did, indeed, while at Oxford, write a Latin panegyric on Oliver Cromwell, on the occasion of peace being concluded with Holland; but although South was taunted with inconsistency for doing this, it was probably done merely as a literary exercise; and as a biographer remarks, "It was certainly the last compliment he ever paid to Cromwell." The light in which he regarded the Protector may be gathered from a sermon which, after the Restoration, he preached before King Charles II. His text was, "The lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing of it is of the Lord"; and the lesson which he drew from the text was, "All contingencies are under the direction of God's Providence." Speaking of the great results that have sprung from small and unexpected causes, he went on to say: "Who that had looked upon Agathocles first handling the clay, and making pots under his father, and afterwards turning robber, would have thought that from such a condition he would come to be King of Sicily? Who that had seen Masaniello, a poor fisherman, with his red cap and his angle, could have reckoned it possible to see such a pitiful thing, within a week after, shining in his cloth of gold, and with a word or a nod absolutely commanding the whole city of Naples? And who that had beheld such a bankrupt beggarly fellow as Cromwell, first entering

the Parliament House with a threadbare torn cloak and a greasy hat (and perhaps neither of them paid for), could have suspected that in the space of so few years he should, by the murder of one king and the banishment of another, ascend the throne, be invested in the royal robes, and want nothing of the state of a king but the changing of his hat into a crown?"

It is said that when this was uttered from the pulpit in the Chapel Royal, Charles II. turned in his pew to the Duke of Buckingham, and whispered, "Ods fish, Lory, that Chaplain of yours must be a bishop; put me in mind of him at the next death."

Invective is not the only quality to be found in South's sermons. There is unquestionably too much of it, but there are passages of tenderness and spiritual fervour. It was for their disloyalty and fancied hypocrisy and bigotry that South assailed the Puritans; and no one can deny him the credit of being perfectly honest and outspoken in his language. If he denounced the morbid enthusiasm of the Commonwealth, he did not spare the fashionable vices of the Restoration. All artificiality and sentimentalism were distasteful to him; he could not refrain from satirising the style even of the great Royalist, Jeremy Taylor.

To this day the writings of South can be recommended as models of expression: not on account of his power of denunciation and sarcasm, but on account of his clearness and vigour, his robustness and freedom from all affectation and unhealthy sentiment. In doctrinal matters South was more akin to his Puritan opponents than either he or they might have been disposed to own. He was as vehement against Rome as against the Puritans, and sundry tenets, which are now considered to be peculiarly Anglican, were attacked by him with unflagging ardour. The vials of his wrath were poured out

especially on those who detected "Popery" in the Church of England. "It is certainly the most frontless, barefaced lie, and the most senseless calumny that ever was dictated by the father of lies, or uttered by any of his sons. And I could wish myself but as sure of my own salvation, as I am that those wretches stand condemned in their own hearts and consciences while they are charging this upon us." He enumerates seven points in which it is evident that the Church of England repudiates the doctrine of the Church of Rome. "1. Does the Church of England own the Pope's supremacy? No. 2. Does the Church of England own the Pope's infallibility? No. 3. Does the Church of England own a transubstantiation of the elements in the Sacrament into the natural Body and Blood of Christ, all the accidents of those elements continuing still the same? No: she rejects it as the greatest defiance of reason and depravation of religion that ever was obtruded upon the belief and conscience of men . . . and withal as a direct cause of the greatest impiety in practice, which is idolatry, and that of the very worst and meanest kind, in giving divine worship to a piece of bread. 4. Does the Church of England hold the divine authority of unwritten traditions equal to that of the Scriptures? No. 5. Does the Church of England hold auricular or private confession to the priest as an integral part of repentance and necessary condition of absolution? No: the Church of England . . . rejects it as a snare and a burden groundlessly and tyrannically imposed upon the Church, and too often and easily abused in the Romish Communion to the basest and most flagitious purposes. But so much of private confession as may be of spiritual use for the disburdening of a troubled conscience, unable of itself to master or grapple with its own doubts, by imparting them to some knowing, discreet, spiritual person for his advice and

resolution about them: so much the Church of England does approve, advise, and allow of. . . . 6. Does the Church of England hold purgatory, together with its appendant doctrine, of the Pope's power to release souls out of it? No, our Church rejects it as a fable. . . . 7. Does the Church of England, either by its belief or practice, own that article about the invocation of saints, and the addressing our prayers immediately to them . . . ? No, our Church cashiers the whole article as contumelious to and inconsistent with the infinitely perfect mediatorship and intercession of Christ." It was "impossible for a man to be a papist without holding these, or to hold these without being a papist."

IV. Another Royalist divine, who is almost forgotten, was Dr. John Scott, rector of St. Giles-in-the-Fields, author of a work entitled *The Christian Life from its Beginning to its Consummation in Glory.* He was a man much esteemed for his consistent character. He was offered high preferment, deaneries and bishopries one after the other, but declined them all. His work on the *Christian Life* was once widely renowned, and was pronounced by Addison to be "one of the finest and most rational schemes of divinity that is written in our tongue or in any other." Philip Doddridge records that a guinea presented to him by a friend, was at once expended on Scott's *Christian Life;* and Dr. Pusey declares that of English theological works, Scott's *Christian Life* "contains the best systematic statement of Christian doctrine." It is now very rarely to be met with. Its size, for a work of edification, is appalling to a modern reader, but although a great part of it may be found tedious and may be skipped, there are passages of great value and beauty. One reason why it could command the admiration of men so diverse as Addison, Doddridge, and Pusey, may be found in its elevation above the strife of parties.

"My lot falling in this unhappy age," so the author expresses the motive which prompted him to write, "wherein the best Church and Religion in the world are in such apparent danger of being crucified, like their blessed Author, between those two thieves (and both, alas! impenitent ones), Superstition and Enthusiasm, I thought myself obliged not to sit still as an unconcerned spectator of the tragedy, but in my little sphere, and according to my poor ability, to endeavour its prevention; and considering that the most effectual means the Romanists have used to subvert this Church which they so much envy, and all the reformations they so much admire and depend on, hath been to divide her own children from her, and arm them against her, by starting new opinions among them, and engaging their zeal (which was wont to be employed to better purposes) in hot disputes about the modes and circumstances of her worship, I thought a discourse of the Christian Life, which is the proper sphere of Christian zeal, might be a good expedient to take men off from those dangerous contentions which were kindled, and are fled and blown by such as design our common ruin. For sure, did our people thoroughly understand what 'tis to be Christians indeed, and how much duty that implies, they would never find so much leisure as they do to quarrel and wrangle about trifles."

V. As illustrating the religious spirit of the time, two laymen, whose writings are marked by distinct individuality, may be cited. One was Sir Thomas Browne, the physician. He wrote various works, but he is best remembered by his *Religio Medici*, which he did not intend to publish, but which, after passing from hand to hand in a manuscript form, was published without his knowledge, and soon obtained circulation. In the first authorised edition he asks his readers to remember that

as the book was "a private exercise directed to himself, what is delivered therein was rather a memorial unto him than an example or rule unto any other"; also that he had forsaken some opinions which he held when the book was written; and that many expressions were "rhetorical" and "tropical," "to be taken in a soft and flexible sense, and not to be called unto the rigid test of reason." With these reservations he committed his work to the press.

[For my religion, though there be several circumstances that might persuade the world I have none at all—as the general scandal of my profession, the natural course of my studies, the indifferency of my behaviour and discourse in matters of religion (neither violently defending one, nor with that common ardour and contention opposing another),—yet, in despite thereof, I dare without usurpation assume the honourable style of a Christian. Not that I merely owe this title to the font, my education, or the clime wherein I was born, as being bred up either to confirm those principles my parents instilled into my understanding, or by a general consent proceed in the religion of my country; but having, in my riper years and confirmed judgment, seen and examined all I find myself obliged, by the principles of grace, and the law of mine own reason, to embrace no other name but this. . . . Methinks there be not impossibilities enough in religion for an active faith: the deepest mysteries ours contains have not only been illustrated, but maintained, by syllogism and the rule of reason. . . . I desire to exercise my faith in the difficultest point; for to credit ordinary and visible objects is not faith but persuasion. Some believe the better for seeing Christ's sepulchre; and, when they have seen the Red Sea, doubt not of the miracle. Now, contrarily, I bless myself, and am thankful that I lived not in the days of miracles; that I never saw Christ nor his disciples. I would not have been one of those Israelites that passed the Red Sea, nor one of Christ's patients on whom He wrought His wonders; then had my faith been thrust upon me; nor should I enjoy that greater blessing pronounced to all that believe and saw not. . . .

That wherein God Himself is happy, the holy angels are happy, in whose defect the devils are unhappy; that dare I call happiness: whatsoever conduceth unto this may, with an easy metaphor, deserve that name; whatsoever else the world terms happiness is,

to me, a story out of Pliny, a tale of Bocace or Malizspini, an apparition or neat delusion, wherein there is no more of happiness than the name. Bless me in this life with but the peace of my conscience, command of my affections, the love of Thyself, and my dearest friends, and I shall be happy enough to pity Caesar. These are, O Lord, the humble desires of my most reasonable ambition, and all I dare call happiness on earth ; wherein I set no rule or limit to Thy hand or Providence ; dispose of me according to the wisdom of Thy pleasure. Thy will be done, though in my own undoing.

VI. The other layman whom we mention was Henry Vaughan, the Welsh poet. In style and spirit he bears a considerable resemblance to George Herbert; and in one of his poems, "The Retreat," he has been held to be no unworthy predecessor of Wordsworth. His poem on "Departed Friends" is now included in many anthologies.

They are all gone into the world of light,
And I alone sit lingering here.
Their very memory is fair and bright,
And my sad thoughts doth clear.

. . . . .

I see them walking in an air of glory,
Whose light doth trample on my days ;
My days which are at best but dull and hoary,
Mere glimmering and decays.

In proof of the forgetfulness into which this quaint and beautiful writer's work had fallen, it is not many years since his fellow-countryman, Sir Lewis Morris, addressed to him admiring verses inscribed "To an Unknown Poet." The words which conclude this invocation of Vaughan may fitly express the feeling which we cherish towards him and towards others who from far past times are still inspiring us with their words :—

Thou hast rejoined thy dear ones now, and art,
Dear Soul, as then thou wouldst be, free :
I, still a prisoner, strive to do my part
In memory of thee.

Thou art so high, and yet unknown ; shall I
Repine that I too am obscure ?
Nay, what care I though all my verse shall die,
If only it is pure.

So, some new singer of the days to be,
Reading this page with soft young eyes,
Shall note the tribute which I pay to thee
With youth's sweet frank surprise,

And musing in himself, perchance shall say,
"Two bards whom centuries part are here :
One whose high fame and name defy decay,
And one who held him dear."

CHAPTER XVII

"THE SPECTATOR"

1710–1714

I. The reign of Queen Anne is one of the marked epochs in the history of English literature. It was a period in which great attention was paid to style and composition. The works which were then produced do not rank among the most learned, the most profound, the most lofty, but they rank among the most graceful, the most pointed of which English literature can boast. It was during this time that our periodical literature may be said to have taken its rise. There had been newspapers and there had been fugitive essays, but the production of what deserves to be called Periodical Literature dates from this time. Daniel Defoe had made some attempts, but the two names which are especially associated with this style of composition are Richard Steele and Joseph Addison. They were at school together ; and Addison, it has been said, remained Steele's head-boy to the end of the chapter.

There is something in the character of Steele which reminds us of Oliver Goldsmith: the same kindness of disposition, the same weaknesses and inconsistencies. He was at one time a soldier in the Horse Guards. He was easily led astray, and in order to fortify himself he wrote a book called *The Christian Hero*. There seem to have been in Steele faults conspicuous enough to make men smile at his authorship of such a work, but despite those faults which could not be hidden, he was never accused of insincerity. He began in the year 1710 a periodical called *The Tatler*, which appeared thrice a week for about two years. It treated current events in a light and pleasant manner, and was very popular. It was not till eighty numbers had appeared that Addison had any share in it. But when he began to write, its success was greater than ever. "I fared," said Steele, who was singularly free from jealousy, "like a distressed prince who calls in a powerful neighbour to his aid; I was undone by my auxiliary, when I had once called him in, I could not subsist without dependence on him."

This alliance was still more indispensable in the new periodical which was started after circumstances had led to the cessation of *The Tatler*. On Thursday, March 1, 1711, the first number of *The Spectator* appeared, and was continued daily till the end of 1712; then it reappeared from June till December 1714, when it finally stopped. Every one has heard of *The Spectator*, and there are passages from it in common circulation, but it is doubtful whether it has in these days many readers. Many of the subjects which it discussed were necessarily of purely ephemeral interest, although they are still of the greatest value for those who would understand the tone and manners of the period. The subjects also, it must be confessed, are often treated in a manner which seems slight and superficial to our more thorough and introspective

age. But the elegance, the delicacy, the humour, the tenderness of many of these brief papers have never been surpassed. When we think of *The Spectator* it is usually of its lighter articles, its kindly ridicule of fashionable folly, its delineation of quaintnesses and oddities, but in its more serious aspects it represents the religious literature of the period.

II. The largest contributor, both of the grave and the gay articles, was Addison. His name is regarded with respect and affection. He was not without faults; he was, to some extent, a victim of the intemperate habits of his age; but he somehow conveys a sense of personal dignity which is lacking in Steele; and we regard him as worthy of the honour in which he is held; we never dispute his claim to be a sincerely religious man; and we see nothing inconsistent or mock-heroic when, as he lay dying at the age of forty-seven, he sent for his dissipated step-son, Lord Warwick, and said to him with affectionate impressiveness: "See in what peace a Christian can die." Hence it was that a friend, Tickell, wrote of him in an elegy—

> He taught us how to live: and O too high
> The price of knowledge, taught us how to die.

The Being of God, the Immortality of Man, the Certainty of Death, the Mischief of Atheism, the Truth of the Christian Religion are among the themes to which he frequently recurred. The placidity of his faith may be seen in the conclusion of an essay in which he exposes the absurdity of lingering superstition. "I know but one way of fortifying my soul against these gloomy presages and terrors of mind, and that is by securing to myself the friendship and protection of that Being who disposes of events and governs futurity. He sees, at one view, the whole thread of my existence, not only that part of it which I have already passed through, but that which

runs forward into all the depths of eternity. When I lay me down to sleep, I recommend myself to His care; when I awake, I give myself up to His direction. Amidst all the evils that threaten me, I will look up to Him for help, and question not but He will either avert them, or turn them to my advantage. Though I know neither the time nor the manner of the death I am to die, I am not at all solicitous about it, because I am sure that He knows them both, and that He will not fail to comfort and support me under them."

Elsewhere he asserts: "For my own part, I think the Being of a God is so little to be doubted that it is almost the only truth we are sure of, and such a truth as we meet with in every object, in every occurrence, and in every thought."

The brevity of human life has seldom been more pensively touched than by Addison; for example, in his account of a visit to Westminster Abbey: "When I look upon the tombs of the great, every emotion of envy dies in me; when I read the epitaphs of the beautiful, every inordinate desire goes out; when I meet with the grief of parents upon a tombstone, my heart melts with compassion; when I see the tomb of the parents themselves, I consider the vanity of grieving for those whom we must quickly follow; when I see kings lying by those who deposed them; when I consider rival wits placed side by side, or the holy men that divided the world with their contests and disputes, I reflect with sorrow and astonishment on the little competitions, factions, and debates of mankind. When I read the several dates of the tombs, of some that died yesterday, and some six hundred years ago, I consider that great day when we shall all of us be contemporaries, and make our appearance together."

The Vision of Mirza is a masterpiece of allegory, worthy to be set beside *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Mirza in

his vision was shown a huge valley, with a prodigious tide of water rolling through it, and a bridge standing in the midst of the tide. " 'The Bridge,' " said the genius who showed him these sights, " 'is Human Life: consider it attentively.' Upon a more leisurely survey of it, I found that it consisted of threescore and ten entire arches, with several broken arches, which, added to those that were entire, made up the number about an hundred. . . . I saw multitudes of people passing over it, and a black cloud hanging on each end of it. As I looked more attentively I saw several of the passengers dropping through the bridge into the great tide that flowed beneath it, and upon further examination perceived that there were immumerable trap-doors that lay concealed in the bridge, which the passengers no sooner trod upon, but they fell through into the tide, and immediately disappeared. . . . My heart was filled with a deep melancholy to see several dropping unexpectedly in the midst of mirth and jollity, and catching at everything that stood by them to save themselves. Multitudes were very busy in the pursuit of bubbles that glittered in their eyes and danced before them, but often when they thought themselves within the reach of them, their footing failed, and down they sunk. . . . 'Alas,' said I, 'man was made in vain! How is he given away to misery and mortality! tortured in life, and swallowed up in death!' The genius, being moved with compassion towards me, bid me quit so uncomfortable a prospect. . . . I directed my sight as I was ordered, and I saw the valley opening at the farther end and spreading forth into an immense ocean, planted with immumerable islands, that were covered with fruits and flowers. I wished for the wings of an eagle that I might fly away to those happy seats; but the genius told me there was no passage to them except through the gates of death that I saw opening every moment upon

the bridge. . . . 'Think not man was made in vain who has such an eternity reserved for him.' At length, said I, 'Show me now the secrets that lie hid under those dark clouds.' The genius making me no answer, I turned about to address myself to him a second time, but I found that he had left me; I then turned again to the vision which I had been contemplating, but instead of the rolling tide, the arched bridge, and the happy islands, I saw nothing but the long hollow valley of Bagdat, with oxen, sheep, and camels grazing upon the sides of it."

The devout and pensive spirit of Addison found expression in verse as well as in prose. Three of the hymns in the small collection at the end of the Scottish "Paraphrases" were not only written by Addison, but originally appeared in *The Spectator*. "When all Thy mercies, O my God," forms the conclusion of an "Essay on Gratitude." He had been struck with wonder that while Pagan poets celebrated the attributes and perfections of their deities, Christian poets had seldom turned their thoughts that way. It has been conjectured that in the lines—

> Thy bounteous hand with worldly bliss,
> Has made my cup run o'er;
> And in a kind and faithful friend,
> Has doubled all my store,

the kind and faithful friend intended was Richard Steele.

"The spacious firmament on high," occurs at the close of an "Essay on the Means of Strengthening and Confirming Faith." "The last method," says Addison, "which I shall mention for the giving life to a man's faith, is frequent retirement from the world, accompanied with religious meditation. . . . In our retirement everything disposes us to be serious. In courts and cities we are entertained with the works of men; in the country with those of God. Faith and Devotion naturally grow in the mind of every

reasonable man, who sees the impression of divine Power and Wisdom in every object on which he casts his eye. . . . The Psalmist has very beautiful strokes of poetry to this purpose in that exalted strain, 'The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork.' As such a bold and sublime manner of thinking furnishes very noble matter for an Ode, the reader may see it wrought into the following one: 'The spacious firmament on high.'" "It seems to me," says Thackeray, "those verses shine like the stars. They shine out of a great deep calm."

The third of the hymns, "When rising from the bed of death," appears in a letter on sickness, purporting to be written by a clergyman, though really written by Addison himself. "Among all the reflections," says the writer, "which usually rise in the mind of a sick man who has time and inclination to consider his approaching end, there is none more natural than that of his going to appear unbodied before Him who made him. . . . Our holy religion suggests to us the only means whereby our guilt may be taken away, and our imperfect obedience accepted. It is this series of thoughts that I have endeavoured to express in the following hymn, which I have composed during this my sickness:—

When rising from the bed of death."

There were still other hymns contributed to *The Spectator* by Addison, notably a beautiful version of the 23rd Psalm—

The Lord my pasture shall prepare,

and also the hymn—

How are Thy servants blest, O Lord!

which forms the close of an "Essay on Greatness, as a Source of Pleasure," with special reference to the Ocean,

and which professes to have been written upon the conclusion of his travels.

III. The greatest poem which *The Spectator* contained was probably Pope's "Messiah," which Steele introduced with the words: "I will make no apology for entertaining the reader with the following poem, which is written by a great genius, a friend of mine, in the country, who is not ashamed to employ his wit in the praise of his Maker." The poem itself was entitled "Messiah, a Sacred Eclogue composed of several passages of Isaiah the Prophet."

IV. The last paper of all in *The Spectator*, written by Henry Grove, a Presbyterian minister, is a contemplation of the heavenly state, and the vision of God hereafter.

His works but faintly reflect the image of His perfections, 'tis a second-hand knowledge; to have a just idea of Him it may be necessary that we see Him as He is. But what is that? 'Tis something that never entered into the heart of man to conceive; yet what we can easily conceive will be a fountain of unspeakable, of everlasting rapture. All created glories will fade and die away in His presence. Perhaps it will be my happiness to compare this world with the fair exemplar of it in the Divine mind; perhaps to view the original plan of those wise designs that have been executing in a long succession of ages. Thus employed in finding out His works, and contemplating their author, how shall I fall prostrate and adoring, my body swallowed up in the immensity of matter, my mind in the infinitude of His perfections.

CHAPTER XVIII

ISAAC WATTS—PHILIP DODDRIDGE

1674–1751

I. Among the contributors to *The Spectator* was Isaac Watts, who wrote the Letter and Psalm in No. 461. Isaac Watts was born at Southampton in 1674. His father was a Nonconformist who suffered much in consequence

of his convictions. When Isaac was a child his mother used frequently to take him to look at the prison in which his father was confined. And even when the prison doors were opened, the elder Watts did not return to his home, but had to remain in hiding. In his later days the worthy man taught a successful boarding-school at Southampton. He lived till the year 1737, when his son had attained the age of sixty-three, and was "eminent for literature and eminent for piety." Isaac was a delicate and studious child, addicted to rhyming almost from the time that he could put connected sentences together. His mother used to offer the prize of a farthing to the pupil of her husband's who would compose the best verses. On one occasion Isaac, with considerable self-complacency, produced the couplet—

> I write not for a farthing, but to try
> How I your farthing writers can outvie.

His abilities and attainments were so remarkable that a wealthy friend offered to send him to the University in order that he might study for the ministry of the Church of England. This offer he declined, and prepared himself, by attendance at a Dissenting academy, for the work of the ministry among the Independents. His religious experiences were as precocious as his intellectual. In his own words, he "fell under considerable conviction of sin in 1688, and was taught to trust in Christ, 1689." But whether in spite of, or in consequence of, this spiritual experience, he shrank from the responsibilities of the Christian ministry when the time came for him to leave the academy. He remained between two and three years at Southampton, seeking by study, meditation, and prayer to fit himself still further for the sacred office which he hoped to undertake. It was during this period of preparation that an incident is said to have taken place

which marks an epoch in the history of public worship. He had expressed his dissatisfaction with the hymns sung in the chapel which he attended and was challenged to produce something better. He accepted the challenge, and soon afterwards the service one Sunday morning concluded with a hymn which he had written :

> Behold the glories of the Lamb,
> Amid His Father's throne.

The congregation were so delighted that he was invited to write more, and hymn after hymn proceeded from his pen.

After having acted as tutor in the family of Sir John Hartopp, he became assistant minister of an Independent congregation in Mark Lane in 1698, and sole minister in 1702. Of this congregation he remained nominally minister for fifty years, till his death in 1748. But his health was very precarious, and he had not been many years in office till he required the assistance of a colleague, on whom the pastoral care of the congregation almost wholly devolved. On his recovery from an attack of nervous fever in 1712, he was invited by Sir Thomas and Lady Abney to visit them for a week. He remained under their hospitable roof for thirty-six years. Sir Thomas died in 1722, but Watts continued to be the guest of Lady Abney and her daughters till he died. "A coalition like this," says Dr. Johnson, "a state in which the notions of patronage and independence were overpowered by the perception of reciprocal benefits, deserves a particular memorial."

His habitual gentleness and charm of manner endeared him to all with whom he came in contact, to the servants of the household, and to visitors as well as to the members of the family. "Madam," said Dr. Watts on one occasion to the Countess of Huntingdon, "your ladyship is come to see me on a very remarkable day." "Why so remark-

able?" she asked. "This day thirty years," he replied, "I came hither to the house of my good friend, Sir Thomas Abney, intending to spend but one week under his friendly roof, and I have extended my visit to the length of exactly thirty years." "Sir," added Lady Abney, "what you have termed a long thirty years' visit, I consider as the shortest my family ever received."

During his stay with the Abneys he preached at times, and his presence was always a source of interest and pleasure to his congregation. But his most effective preaching was accomplished through the press. He was unwearied in the production of works both in prose and in verse. He wrote on many subjects—Logic, Astronomy, Geography, English Grammar. In spite of their ability and erudition these works are of necessity obsolete. "The Logic of Watts," said Sir William Hamilton, "is worth reading as a book, but not as a book upon Logic." To Watts is however due the credit of having done his utmost to dispel the idea that religious books must be dull. "I hate," he said, "the thought of making anything in religion heavy and tiresome."

The prose work by which he is now most remembered was *The Improvement of the Mind: a Supplement to the Art of Logic*. "Few books," said Dr. Johnson, "have been perused by me with greater pleasure than his *Improvement of the Mind*, of which the radical principles may indeed be found in Locke's *Conduct of the Understanding*, but they are so expanded and ramified by Watts as to confer upon him the merit of a work in the highest degree useful and pleasing. Whoever has the care of instructing others may be charged with deficience in his duty if this book is not recommended."

His was the common fate of those who attempt to unite Faith and Reason; who, refusing to shut their eyes to difficulties and dangers of thought arising from

new discoveries, would prove that the faith once delivered to the saints remains unmoved and unimpaired; he was accused of undermining the Faith which he laboured to establish. He who has been not unfitly called "the Poet of the Atonement," has been ranked among those by whom the divinity of our Lord is denied. His speculations on the human nature of the Eternal Word led to his being taxed with heresy by the orthodox; and it is therefore not surprising that the Unitarians of the present day, though with comparatively slight reason, claim him as a forerunner. He suffers in general estimation from accusations of a totally different kind. It is with grimness and gloom, with unlovely representations of the Divine Nature that his name is associated. More especially he is supposed to have repelled many a child from the thought of God. Where he is not denounced with indignation as the poisoner of the innocent happiness of children, he is derided as the compiler of the silliest rhymes. We need not maintain that these criticisms have no foundation. He was somewhat rash in his speculations; he did use unfortunate phrases with regard to God; he did write verses which were commonplace and trivial; but to do him justice, this is the exception and not the rule. He wrote a prodigious quantity of devotional poetry, and a large proportion of it remains unsurpassed to-day. "His devotional poetry," said Dr. Johnson, "is, like that of others, unsatisfactory. The paucity of its topics enforces perpetual repetition, and the sanctity of the matter rejects the ornament of figurative diction. It is sufficient for Watts to have done better than others what no man has done well." And Lord Selborne is of opinion that more hymns which approach to a very high standard of excellence are to be found in his works than in those of any other single writer.

No fewer than twenty-six of the Scottish Paraphrases

were written by him, and every modern hymn-book is largely his debtor. Among the volumes in which his poems originally appeared were *Divine and Moral Songs for Children* and *The Psalms of David Imitated: in the Language of the New Testament, and applied to the Christian State and Worship.* Some of the finest of his hymns are simply free translations or adaptations of the Psalms. "Jesus shall reign where'er the sun" is a rendering of Psalm lxxii., and "O God, our help in ages past" is a rendering of Psalm xc. Dr. Watts was at times, probably on account of the state of his health, predisposed to take a melancholy view of things. "Sometimes," he confessed, "I have been ready to say within myself, Why is my life prolonged in sorrow? What can I do further for God or for man here on earth, since my nature pines away with painful shortness, my nerves are unstrung, my spirits dissipated, and my best powers of acting are enfeebled and almost lost?" But he checked these morbid reflections and conquered them. "Peace, peace, O thou complaining spirit! Dost thou know the counsels of the Almighty, and the secret designs of thy God and Saviour?" And he became perfectly composed and calm as death drew near. "I bless God I can lie down with comfort at night, not being solicitous whether I awake in this world or another." He died on November 26, 1748, aged seventy-four.

The character of Dr. Watts was stainless and unselfish. He administered various charitable trusts with much efficiency and wisdom; and a very large proportion of his own small income was devoted to benevolent purposes. Whatever traces of human weakness we may find in him, the main object of his life was to glorify his Lord and to do good to his fellow-men. The unstinted praise which he receives from Dr. Johnson is among the most convincing proofs that could be given of his blamelessness and single-

mindedness. It was a serious offence in the eyes of Johnson that Watts deliberately declined to join the Church of England; but he contented himself with the generous comment: "Such he was as every Christian Church would rejoice to have adopted." And the characteristic verdict which Johnson, summing up his estimate of Watts's life and work, pronounced, was this: "He is at least one of the few poets with whom youth and ignorance may be safely pleased; and happy will be that reader whose mind is disposed by his verses or his prose to imitate him in all but his nonconformity, to copy his benevolence to man and his reverence to God."

II. *The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul* was one of the most popular religious books of the eighteenth century, and its name is still familiar. Its author was Philip Doddridge, who was born in 1702, the descendant of an old Devonshire family. He was the twentieth child of his parents, although at the time of his birth only one of the other nineteen remained. It was very doubtful whether Philip himself would long survive. He was exceedingly delicate, and had to be tended with the utmost care. His parents died when he was a boy; and the little money which they had left him was lost through the folly of his guardian. His high character and ability, as well as his forlorn condition, gained him friends, and he was by their kindness enabled to obtain the education which he desired. He became while still very young minister of a Dissenting congregation at Kibworth in Leicestershire, and also tutor in a Dissenting academy. He was subsequently removed to Northampton, where he performed a similar double duty. An attempt was made to close the academy on the ground that it was not licensed by the bishop. But the intervention of the king, George II., at the instance of the Earl of Halifax, put an end to the prosecution, and the academy at

Northampton speedily attained a high reputation. Students flocked not only from all quarters of England, but from Scotland and the Continent. The personal labours of Doddridge were immense. He not only gave instruction in the Hebrew Bible, in Theology, Jewish Antiquities, and Church History, but "he taught Algebra, Geometry, Natural Philosophy, Geography, Logic, and Metaphysics." By way of relief, he occasionally delivered lectures on "Rhetoric and Belles Lettres, on the Microscope, and on the Anatomy of the Human Frame." Nowhere did his students find him more interesting than when he took them into the library, and spoke to them of the treasures which it contained. "Going over it case by case and row by row, he pointed out the most important authors, and indicated their characteristic excellences and fixed the mental association by striking or amusing anecdotes." This might seem more than enough to tax the energies of one man, but we are assured that his main work was elsewhere. His labours in connection with the Academy were never allowed to interfere with the duties of his pastorate. His simple, earnest sermons were always carefully prepared; he usually concluded them with an original hymn summing up the teaching which he had been seeking to enforce; and he was intimately acquainted with all his congregation.

With all these duties he devoted such spare time as he had to the preparation of *The Family Expositor: or a Paraphrase and Version of the New Testament with Critical Notes and Practical Improvements*, in six volumes. This work represented the labour of twenty years. He published many smaller works, all of which are now forgotten, with the exception of two: *The Life of Colonel Gardiner* and *The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul*. Colonel Gardiner was the officer whose conversion from unbelief and vice, made known by this book,

attracted much attention then, and is often much referred to still. He fell at the battle of Prestonpans near his own house, his heroism in some degree compensating for the panic which possessed the Royal army. The life of this gallant officer had a great attraction for Sir Walter Scott, who represents him as the colonel of the regiment to which Edward Waverley belonged; and who gives at large in the notes, Doddridge's account both of Colonel Gardiner's conversion and of his death.

The work by which Doddridge is most commonly remembered is *The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul.* He undertook this work at the suggestion of Dr. Isaac Watts. Watts had long meditated the preparation of a treatise on *Practical Piety*, but finding himself unable to accomplish it, he proposed that it should be attempted by Doddridge. The attempt was made, and was eminently successful. The work is a description of the various phases through which the spirit passes from the dawning of religion within it until it enters the heavenly glory. The thoughtless are roused from their lethargy; the conviction of sin is forced upon them; the message of salvation through Christ delivers them from despair; the difficulties and discouragements which beset the Christian are discussed. The moderation with which Doddridge wrote was as commendable as his fervour.

> Into whatever hands this work may come, I must desire that before any pass their judgment upon it they would please to read it through, that they may discuss the connection between one part of it and another. Which I the rather request, because I have long observed that Christians of different parties have been eagerly laying hold on particular parts of the system of Divine truths, and have been contending about them as if each had been all; or as if the separation of the members from each other and from the head were the preservation of the body instead of its destruction. They have been zealous to espouse the defence, and

to maintain the honour and usefulness of each part; whereas their honour, as well as usefulness, seems to me to be much in their connection. And suspicions have often arisen between the respective defenders of each which have appeared as unreasonable and absurd, as if all the preparations for securing one part of a ship in a storm were to be censured as a contrivance to sink the rest.

Dr. Doddridge was always delicate, and his incessant labours did not tend to strengthen his constitution. He became seriously ill in the year 1751, in the forty-ninth year of his age. He was recommended to try a voyage to Spain; and this he was enabled, by the kindness of a clergyman of the Church of England, and other friends, to accomplish. But he never returned. He died and was buried at Lisbon.

It is amazing that a man so delicate should have achieved so much, and that his unrelaxing toil did not bring his life much sooner to a close. "I am generally employed," he said, "with very short intervals, from morning to night, and have seldom more than six hours in bed; yet such is the goodness of God to me that I seldom know what it is to be weary."

It is almost incredible that, with this incessant toil and devotion to duty, the fault which the censoriously disposed generally attributed to him was an undue love of society. He was said to mix too much with the world, and to accommodate himself too much to its ways. The ground for this apparently startling accusation lies in the fact that he was a genial, warm-hearted man, of winning manners, and endowed with a considerable faculty of humour. He took part in innocent amusements, entered into mirth with the glee of a child; he was, as a rule, the most lively of any company in which he chanced to be. He tried to carry out the rule which he laid down for his guidance in youth "of endeavouring to make himself agreeable and useful by tender, com-

passionate, and friendly deportment." The explanation and defence of his life and conduct will be found in those lines which he wrote on the motto of his family, and which Dr. Johnson pronounced to be one of the finest epigrams in the English language. The motto, *Dum vivimus vivamus*, is "in its primary significance," as Dr. Johnson said, "not very suitable to a Christian divine, but Doddridge paraphrased it thus—

> " 'Live while you live,' the Epicure would say,
> 'And seize the pleasures of the present day.'
> 'Live while you live,' the sacred Preacher cries,
> 'And give to God each moment as it flies.'
> Lord, in my views let both united be:
> I live in pleasure when I live in Thee."

CHAPTER XIX

BISHOP BUTLER

1692–1752

The life of Joseph Butler was singularly free from stirring incidents. He was a controversialist; he rose from a comparatively humble position to almost the highest rank that a subject can occupy; he was always a seeker after truth, and yet his career presents no appearance of startling change or violent convulsion; it flowed on calmly and naturally from beginning to end; it contains no record of struggle against adverse circumstances; his arguments stirred up no enmity and his success no envy; his administration involved him in scarcely any difficulties, and no trace remains of mental conflict and doubt. Probably the two features of his life which force themselves upon the reader are these:

It was a life of unchecked prosperity; honour and wealth simply flowed in upon him; and it was, above all, a life of meditation. Called to high public offices and functions, all of which he discharged with conscientious fidelity and practical sagacity, he always seems to be alone, thinking out problems for himself, brooding over the mysteries to be found in the world and its government, and in the nature of man. And it must be granted by every unprejudiced mind that no man ever wore honours more meekly and nobly, ever attained wealth with less self-seeking, or dispensed it with more generosity, was ever less dazzled by splendour, or more unspoiled by admiration. He remained the same simple, modest, absolutely true man amid every advance, for we cannot say vicissitude, of fortune. "We might really fancy," Mr. Bagehot has pleasantly observed, "the world had determined to give for once an encouraging instance of its sensibility to rectitude, of the real and great influence of real and great virtue."[1]

Joseph Butler was born at Wantage, Berkshire, on May 18, 1692, the youngest of eight children of a linen-draper, who had by industry acquired enough to enable him to retire on a modest competence. Butler's early days, therefore, though removed from affluence, were free from the pressure of poverty. His parents were earnest Presbyterians, and their desire was that he should study for the ministry. He accordingly, with this view, attended academies at Gloucester and at Tewkesbury. It was while still a student that Butler wrote a letter to Dr. Samuel Clarke, the well-known author of *A Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God*. "I suppose," such was the beginning of the letter, "you will wonder at the present trouble from one who is a perfect stranger to you, though you are not so to him,

[1] *Literary Studies*, ii. 56.

but I hope the occasion will excuse my boldness. I have made it, sir, my business, ever since I thought myself capable of such sort of reasoning, to prove to myself the Being and Attributes of God." And so he went on to notice a point on which Clarke's reasoning did not appear conclusive. Dr. Clarke was much pleased with the tone and temper of Butler's letter. "Did men," he said in reply, "who publish controversial papers, accustom themselves to write with that candour and ingenuity with which you propose your difficulties, I am persuaded almost all disputes might be very amicably terminated, either by men's coming at last to agree in opinion, or at least finding reason to suffer each other friendly to differ." Several letters passed on each side; eventually Butler professed himself satisfied; and the correspondence is now published among the works both of Dr. Clarke and Dr. Butler.

The wish of his parents that he should be a Presbyterian minister was not to be gratified. A gradual change came over his opinions, and in the year 1714 he entered Oriel College, Oxford, to prepare himself for the ministry of the Church of England. He took orders in 1718, and was appointed preacher at the Rolls Chapel. The sermons which he preached were published in 1726, and have remained among the classics of the English pulpit. The general title of the sermons was *Upon Human Nature: or Man considered as a Moral Agent*, and they treated of such subjects as "The Social Nature of Man," "The Natural Supremacy of Conscience," "The Government of the Tongue," "Compassion," "Resentment," "Self-Deceit." Each of them was a thoughtful and philosophical treatise, with scarcely any popular recommendation except that they were not very long. He was emphatically an ethical preacher. The law written in the heart, the witness of the conscience, was

his constant theme. It is somewhat startling to many persons to find that the great Christian apologist was so reticent in his sermons regarding distinctively Christian doctrine. Such doctrine might be implied and suggested, but it was seldom stated, and the references to the words and works, to the life and death of our Lord, are surprisingly few. But Butler knew the age with which he was dealing, and it is probable that his method of leaving things to be inferred and consequences to be drawn, had often more effect than if he had repeated what to many of his hearers and readers might have been regarded as evangelical commonplaces. And so it is that at the present day his sermons, dry, unimpassioned, argumentative though they are, are once more becoming widely read, and are influencing many who might lay aside with contempt sermons which asserted more and proved less. Possibly the most generally interesting and popular of these sermons is one on the Character of Balaam. This is such a subtle and searching analysis of the heart that we cannot but regret that Butler did not compose or leave behind him more appreciations of Scripture characters. His great object was to make people think—to force them to inquire into the meaning of what they professed and did; he wished that in matters of argument it had been customary "to lay before people nothing but premises, and to leave them to draw the conclusions for themselves." Hence the appeals and applications which are so commonly supposed to constitute the essence of a sermon are in his discourses so scantily employed. In the preface he laments the desultory and unintelligent habits of reading into which so many had fallen.

The great number of books and papers of amusement which of one kind or another daily come in one's way have in part occasioned, and most perfectly fall in with and humour this idle

way of reading and considering things. By this means, time even in solitude is happily got rid of without the pain of attention; neither is any part of it more put to the account of idleness, one can scarce forbear saying, is spent with less thought, than great part of that which is spent in reading.

So wrote Butler in 1729; would he have any reason to modify his opinion were it possible for him to rewrite his preface in 1901?

In 1721 Butler was appointed a Prebendary of Salisbury Cathedral; in 1722 he became Rector of Houghton, near Darlington; and in 1725 he was presented to the living of Stanhope, Durham, where he lived in retirement and meditation, though faithfully discharging his duties as parish clergyman for eight years. Few traditions of his manner of life have been recorded; but he is said to have been fond of riding, and of riding very fast; and he was frequently placed in a painful dilemma by the importunities of beggars. He was charitable by disposition, but he knew the evils of indiscriminate almsgiving; hence, often believing that it would be wrong to give, and shrinking from inflicting on himself the pain of refusing, he actually fled when he saw beggars approach, and hid himself in the house. The seclusion of Stanhope was both congenial and beneficial to him, although to his friends, who knew his abilities, it seemed as if he were throwing himself away. It happened about this time that, in consequence of some mistake, Queen Caroline, who had heard Butler's name from his old friend Secker, expressed to Archbishop Blackburn her regret that Butler was dead. "No, madam," answered the Archbishop, "he is not dead but buried."

He was not suffered to remain in obscurity. In 1736 he was, besides having other dignities conferred upon him, appointed Clerk of the Closet to Queen Caroline. The Queen was deeply interested in philosophical and

theological subjects, and delighted to discuss them with a distinguished company of divines, of which Butler became the centre. It was in 1736 that he published *The Analogy of Religion to the Constitution and Course of Nature*. In the epitaph on Butler in Bristol Cathedral, written by Robert Southey, it is said: "Others had established the historical and prophetical grounds of the Christian religion, and that sure testimony of its truth which is found in its perfect adaptation to the heart of man. It was reserved for him to develop its analogy to the constitution and course of nature, and laying his strong foundations in the depth of that great argument there to construct another and irrefragable proof, thus rendering philosophy subservient to faith, and finding in outward and visible things the type and evidence of those within the veil." Strictly speaking, this was not what Butler did or even attempted to do. Were this verdict of Southey literally accurate, had Butler given an irrefragable proof of Christianity, the arguments of the *Analogy* would be valid against any antagonist, would be as triumphant against the scepticism of the twentieth century as against the scepticism of the eighteenth. The conflict now is waged with different weapons, and on a different part of the field; and the *Analogy* is of necessity in some degree irrelevant. The merit of the *Analogy* lay in its refutation of a particular class of opponents, meeting them on their own ground, and conquering them with their own weapons. There never was a calmer, more sober-minded controversialist than Butler. He treated questions with perfect impartiality; he enters into no personal contention; he mentions the name of no opponent; all seems to be abstract and academic. But, none the less, he had certain men in his eye, and to the demolition of their position he set himself. It was a time in which free-

thinking had become fashionable, in which it was a mark of superiority to scoff at Christianity, in which Deism, the acknowledgment of a Creator and of a future state, without reference to the Revelation of Christ or to any Revelation, was the utmost religion that any man of sense could be expected to profess. "It is come, I know not how," writes Butler in the preface, "to be taken for granted by many persons, that Christianity is not so much as a subject for inquiry, but that it is now, at length, discovered to be fictitious. And accordingly they treat it as if, in the present age, this were an agreed point among all people of discernment; and nothing remained but to set it up as a principal subject of mirth and ridicule, as it were by way of reprisals for its having so long interrupted the pleasures of the world." That was the prevailing state of opinion; that was what Butler set himself to combat; and what was the acknowledgment that he intended to wring from his adversaries? "Thus much, at least," he said, "will be here found not taken for granted, but proved, that any reasonable man who will thoroughly consider the matter, may be as much assured as he is of his own being, that it is not, however, so clear a case that there is nothing in it." Such was his modest intention; did he not carry it out? He wished to prove that it was not quite so clear a case as his adversaries fancied, that there was nothing in Christianity. It might not seem a high aim; it was sufficient for his immediate purpose; the *Analogy* certainly contributed to make the Deist position untenable; and from that day to this, whether people believe or disbelieve in Christianity, the imagination that there is "nothing in it" has passed away. The scene of the conflict has been changed; the Christian apologist of to-day has to meet different objections from those which Butler had to meet, but the fairness, the dispassionateness, the mingled reasonableness

and reverence of the work, remain as models for all time. With what wisdom and suggestiveness he treats such subjects as mediation and atonement; how happy for the faith in Christ had all theologians learned something of his caution and reserve in treating of mysteries like these.

The design of this treatise is not to vindicate the character of God, but to show the obligations of men; it is not to justify His Providence, but to show what belongs to us to do. These are two subjects and ought not to be confounded. And though they may at length run up into each other, yet observations may immediately tend to make out the latter, which do not appear, by any immediate connection, to the purpose of the former which is less our concern than many seem to think. For first it is not necessary we should justify the dispensations of Providence further than to show that the things objected against may, for aught we know, be consistent with justice and goodness. Suppose, then, that there are things in the system of this world and plan of Providence relating to it which, taken alone, would be unjust; yet it has been shown unanswerably that if we could take in the reference which these things may have to other things past, present, and to come, to the whole scheme, which the things objected against are part of, these very things might, for aught we know, be found to be not only consistent with justice but instances of it. Indeed, it has been shown by the analogy of what we see, not only possible that this may be the case, but credible that it is. And thus objections drawn from such things are answered, and Providence is vindicated, as far as religion makes its vindication necessary.

In 1738 he was made Bishop of Bristol, a poorly endowed See, so that he also accepted the Deanery of St. Paul's. The uniform and unchequered prosperity of Butler brings into prominence a circumstance for which, not apparently at the time but after his death, he was attacked, and declared to have been a Roman Catholic in disguise. In repairing the Palace Chapel at Bristol, he placed "over the Holy Table a white marble cross, about three feet high, which was thrown up in relief by a slab of black marble into which it was sunk, and was

surrounded by a frame of beautifully carved cedar wood, the gift of the Bristol merchants."

In 1747 Butler declined to be made Archbishop of Canterbury, giving among his reasons that "it was too late for him to try to support a falling Church." When people of a melancholy or faithless turn of mind in our own day talk about the days of this or that Church being numbered, it may be well to remind them that Bishop Butler uttered that desponding sentence a hundred and fifty years ago. He rejected the Archbishopric of Canterbury, but he accepted a few years later the Bishopric of Durham. This great bishopric was offered to him first of all with intimation that the Lord-Lieutenancy of the County would be no longer attached to it; Butler replied that it was to him a matter of indifference whether he were Bishop of Bristol or Bishop of Durham, but it was not a matter of indifference that the honours of the See should be invaded; therefore without the lord-lieutenancy he would not take the bishopric; and he was appointed on his own terms. Prince-Bishop of Durham, he was as simple in his tastes, as humble and devout, as much given to study and meditation, as ever he was. His contemplative and almost ascetic life was the only thing suspicious about him, and there were foolish whispers in some quarters about his leanings to the Church of Rome. This suspicion seems to have been somewhat strengthened by the delivery of a charge to the clergy of his diocese in 1751, in which he said some wise things about the need of maintaining the external observances of religion.

He died on June 16, 1752, at Bath, whither he had gone for the benefit of his health. It is said that on his death-bed he expressed it as an awful thing to appear before the Moral Governor of the world, and that his chaplain quoted the verse of St. John: "The blood of

Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin." Butler exclaimed: "Oh this is comfortable!" and expired almost with these words on his lips. He was buried in Bristol Cathedral.

The writings of Bishop Butler are far from voluminous. They are comprised in two small volumes; not infrequently they may be had in one. He left instructions at his death that his manuscripts were to be burned. He suffered nothing to appear in print which he had not carefully thought over and revised. He has only one object in writing—to instruct and to convince. He aims at stating the truth which he believes it needful for the world to accept, and he states it without amplification or adornment. Much has been said against his style; it is strangely cumbrous and inelegant; he labours to find words to express the thoughts which are struggling for utterance. No man knew better what he wished to say; he meditated long before he spoke on any subject; but familiar though it was to him, and though he saw it in all its bearings, he could not state it so that it would be plain to all. The subject, of course, was often abstruse, and it would be unjust to expect as clear and limpid a style as if he had been writing light literature. But the difficulty lies often with his language, and not with his subject; and Dean Goulburn, an ardent admirer, has hazarded the wish that some one with Archbishop Whately's faculty of clear statement would re-write Bishop Butler's sermons for the benefit of an age which is repelled by their style. On the other hand, let us be thankful for what we have; and even for the style this must be said: it is characteristic of the man; it is eminently sincere. He indulges in no waste of words. He says what he has to say, and is done. Not a syllable is used for effect; there is not a trace of affectation, no playing with phrases, no trick of rhetorical artifice. Those who set themselves honestly to read his sermons will find

them easier to follow than they expected, will come to love those ungainly and awkward sentences, will find them everywhere transparent with the beauty of truth. He who reads and re-reads until he masters them will have his mental and spiritual life braced and invigorated. It is good to come in contact with a mind and spirit so genuine and single; for this is the impression which a study of his life and writings must leave: that if he was great as a theologian, great as an apologist, great as a thinker, he was greatest of all as a man.

CHAPTER XX

WILLIAM LAW

1686–1761

William Law is one of the most singular figures in the history of our religious literature. In character, in opinions, in manner of life he stands alone. He seems especially out of place in the age in which his lot was cast. It was an age of religious apathy; he was consumed with religious zeal. It was an age of reason; he was a mystic. It was an age of conviviality; he was an ascetic. In some respects he was almost as inconsistent with himself as with his contemporaries. He was constantly depreciating reason and the acquisition of secular knowledge; but he was himself a learned man, and his writings are remarkable for their dialectic skill and their literary grace. He was a High Churchman and an uncompromising opponent of the Latitudinarianism of his day, but he laid such stress on the sufficiency of the Inner Word as almost to do away with the need for any external authority; and it is in him, more than in any writer of

the eighteenth century, that F. D. Maurice, Bishop Ewing, Thomas Erskine of Linlathen, and the advocates of the "Larger Hope" have found a spiritual ancestor. This is one of the strange things about him. He was engaged in controversy with representatives of almost every school of thought, but men most utterly opposed to him and to one another have acknowledged the curious fascination which he has had for them. John Wesley, Samuel Johnson, Edward Gibbon all came, more or less, under his spell. His works, after being well-nigh forgotten for many years, have again sprung into fame. Selections; single volumes; a complete edition have been almost simultaneously issued by different editors and different publishers. And his merits are forced upon our attention by writers so diverse as Canon Overton, Dr. Alex. Whyte, and Mr. Leslie Stephen.

William Law was born in 1686 at King's Cliffe, Northamptonshire. His father was a grocer, possessed of considerable means. William received a good education, and at the age of nineteen was sent to Emmanuel College, Cambridge. His profoundly religious spirit may be gathered from the rules which, on entering the University, he drew up for the guidance of his life. Among these rules, too numerous to quote in full, were the following: "To remember frequently, and to impress it upon my mind deeply, that no condition of life is for enjoyment, but for trial; and that every power, ability, or advantage we have are all so many talents, to be accounted for to the Judge of all the world. To avoid all excess in eating and drinking. To pray privately thrice a day, besides my morning and evening prayers. To spend some time in giving an account of the day, previous to evening prayer: How have I spent the day? What sin have I committed? What temptations have I withstood? Have I performed all my duty?"

He was a diligent student both of classics and philosophy. His acquaintance with modern languages seems to have been greater than was common at the time, and he read even then somewhat extensively in mystical writers. He was ordained in 1711, but he never had a cure of souls. He was so conscientious a Jacobite in politics that he refused to take the oath of allegiance to the Hanoverian Government, and was consequently debarred from accepting the presentation to any living. He was even suspended for a short time on account of a speech which he made at a public meeting in the University. In that speech he maintained the apparently harmless theme that the sun shone although it was eclipsed ; but the sun meant the exiled House of Stuart, and the eclipsing body meant the dynasty by which the Stuarts had been supplanted. He is known to have preached on several occasions, but there is only one of his sermons extant, and his influence was to be achieved almost solely by his pen.

His first publication of any importance consisted of Letters to the Bishop of Bangor, Dr. Hoadley. Bishop Hoadley belonged to the "Latitudinarian" school of divines, and had expressed opinions which, in Law's estimation, were exceedingly heretical regarding the sacraments and the ministry. Whatever may be one's views as to the side on which truth lay, there can be no doubt as to the ability with which Law assailed the position of Hoadley ; the mingled logic, fervour, and sarcasm which pervaded the Letters from beginning to end.

The next production of Law was his *Remarks upon a Book entitled "The Fable of the Bees : or, Private Vices, Public Benefits."* That book was written by Bernard de Mandeville, a Dutchman by birth ; and the object of the book was to prove that what is called Virtue has no

superiority over what is called Vice, that there is no more reason for man than for lower animals to have another guide for his actions than instinct or inclination. "The province you have chosen for yourself," wrote Law, in his uncompromising style, "is to deliver man from the sagacity of moralists, the encroachments of virtue, and to replace him in the rights and privileges of brutality; to recall him from the giddy heights of rational dignity and angelic likeness to go to grass, or wallow in the mire."

His next work was a tremendous onslaught on the theatre. The severest comments ever made by the grimmest Puritan are not more severe than the comments of this High Churchman. "The absolute unlawfulness of the stage entertainment" was the proposition which he believed himself to have "fully demonstrated." Any association whatever with the theatre, whether as an actor or a spectator, he held to be sinful. The only justification for his language is to be found in the incredibly low condition to which the stage had sunk. He renewed his attack in one of his greatest works, *The Treatise on Christian Perfection*. Law was not a "Perfectionist" in the modern sense; he did not claim to be perfect himself. He put upon the title-page, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect." He did not deny that there were imperfections in the best; but he argued that no man ought ever to be satisfied with imperfection, with anything short of that Christian perfection which consisted in nothing but "the right performance of necessary duties." "For, consider, what can Christian perfection be but such a right performance of all the duties of life as is according to the laws of Christ? What can it be but a living in such holy tempers, and acting with such dispositions as Christianity requires? Now, if this be perfection, who can exceed it? And yet what state of circumstances of

life can allow any people to fall short of it?" The pages of this work were lighted up by a device of which Law was to make still more abundant use in later works—sketches of character, such as had embellished *The Spectator* or *The Tatler;* "Patronus is fond of a clergyman that understands music, painting, statuary, and architecture. He never comes to the sacrament, but will go forty miles to see a fine altar-piece. He goes to Church when there is a new tune to be heard, but never has any more serious thoughts about salvation than about flying. . . . Matrona is old, and has been these fifty years eating and drinking, sleeping and waking, dressing and undressing, paying and receiving visits. She has no profaneness; and if she has no piety, it is owing to this that she never had a spare half-hour in all her life to think about it. She envies her daughters because they will dress and visit when she is dead." The tone of the book is, as will be gathered from these extracts, very austere; but although it may, in our estimation, put under a ban much that is innocent, much even that might be helpful, it is a noble book, most bracing and stimulating, free from the slightest suspicion of unreality, written throughout in the clear, robust, manly style of which Law was so great a master.

In the year 1727 Law was appointed tutor to the son of a Mr. Gibbon at Putney. Law's pupil was destined to become the father of the celebrated Edward Gibbon, the historian. In the father there do not seem to have been many of the traits of his distinguished son. Edward Gibbon senior was dull and weak; and, in spite of the influence of Law, never manifested any special grace of character. If Law did not much impress his pupil, there were others who gathered round him, and found in him a sincere and beneficial spiritual director. And even those who did not accept his teaching, on whom his

counsels might seem to be lost, were constrained to reverence the man. "In our family," wrote the great historian in his autobiography, "he left the reputation of a worthy and pious man, who believed all he professed and practised all that he enjoined." Among the friends whom Law made during his stay at Putney was John Byrom, who occupied to Law somewhat the relation of Boswell to Johnson. Byrom was a man of considerable ability, and wrote verses, a few of which are still in common use. He tried to popularise some of Law's writings by turning them into rhymes, but the attempt was a ludicrous failure; Law's prose, which in the eighteenth century, or even in the nineteenth, had hardly any superior for clearness and force, was infinitely preferable to Byrom's poetry. The most memorable persons with whom Law became acquainted at Putney were John and Charles Wesley. His influence over them for a time was very marked, and even when they no longer looked up to him as a leader they bore unmistakable evidence of his teaching. John Wesley found in Law's treatises and conversation a powerful impulse towards holiness of life, but it was not until he met a much plainer man, Peter Böhler, that he knew what peace and joy in believing meant. In the ecstasy of this discovery he wrote to Law, beseeching him to examine himself, because he was still in darkness. Law's reply was very severe, though couched in studiously temperate language, and the controversy went from bad to worse, till there was a temporary estrangement. But in later days the Wesleys and the Methodists in general were fond of recommending Law's books to such as sought to lead a spiritual life.

It was during his stay at Putney that Law's best-known work, *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life, Adapted to the State and Condition of all Orders of*

Christians, made its appearance. The reader is tempted to doubt and deny its claim to be suited for all orders of Christians, because the practices which it enjoins could only be fully carried out by the few who have abundance of leisure. The amount of daily devotion, meditation, singing of psalms and hymns, reading of the Scriptures and religious books which he recommends would be impossible to any one who had to attend to any business or profession. But when this allowance is made, a more vigorous, earnest, and convincing treatise could not be imagined. No book can hold up a useless and aimless life to ridicule and contempt more mercilessly and more humorously. It has possessed a strange fascination for literary men. "When at Oxford," said Dr. Johnson, "I took up Law's *Serious Call to a Holy Life*, expecting to find it a dull book (as such books generally are), and perhaps laugh at it. But I found Law quite an overmatch for me; and this was the first occasion of my thinking in earnest of religion after I became capable of rational inquiry. . . . It is the finest piece of hortatory theology in any language." "Mr. Law's masterpiece"—such is the respectful reference of the sceptical Gibbon to his father's tutor—"the *Serious Call*, is still read as a popular and powerful book of devotion. His precepts are rigid, but they are founded on the Gospel; his satire is sharp, but it is drawn from the knowledge of human life; and many of his portraits are not unworthy of the pen of La Bruyère. If he finds a spark of piety in his reader's mind he will soon kindle it to a flame, and a philosopher must allow that he exposes with equal severity and truth the strange contradiction between the faith and practice of the Christian world." "The *Serious Call*," writes Mr. Leslie Stephen, "may be read with pleasure even by the purely literary critic. Perhaps, indeed, there is a touch of profanity in reading in cold blood a book which through-

out palpitates with the deepest emotions of its author, and which has thrilled so many sympathetic spirits. The power can only be adequately felt by readers who study it on their knees; and those to whom a difference of faith renders that attitude impossible, doubt whether they are not in a position somewhat resembling that of Mephistopheles in the cathedral."[1]

The literary merits of the book, great though they are, do not constitute its chief merits. It is the overwhelming earnestness, the conviction of the littleness of passing things compared with things which endure, that lead to reflection and dissatisfaction with self. The *Serious Call* abounds in those portraits of which *Christian Perfection* gave a few sketches. The most elaborate are probably the contrasted likenesses of Flavia and Miranda.

Flavia has been the wonder of all her friends for her excellent management in making so surprising a figure on so moderate a fortune. She has everything that is in the fashion, and is in every place where there is any diversion. . . . As for poor people, she will admit of no complaints from them; she is very positive they are all cheats and liars, and will say anything to get relief, and therefore it must be a sin to encourage them in their evil ways. You would think Flavia had the tenderest conscience in the world, if you were to see how scrupulous and apprehensive she is of the guilt and danger of giving amiss. . . . Out of thirty years of her life, fifteen of them will have been disposed of in bed; and of the remaining fifteen, about fourteen of them will have been consumed in eating, drinking, dressing, visiting, conversation, reading, and hearing plays and romances, at operas, assemblies, balls, and diversions. For you may reckon all the time that she is up thus spent, except about an hour and a half that is disposed of at church, most Sundays in the year. With great management, and under mighty rules of economy, she will have spent about £6000 upon herself, bating only some crowns, half-crowns, and shillings that have gone from her in accidental charities.

[1] *English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, ii. p. 394.

On the other hand, Miranda used her fortune not as her own, but only as entrusted with it for the good of the community. "She is only one of a certain number of poor people that are relieved out of her fortune, and she only differs from them in the blessedness of giving." The originals of these two characters are rightly or wrongly supposed to have been the two aunts of Gibbon the historian—"the heathen and the Christian sister," as Gibbon himself calls them.

The "Christian sister," Miss Hester Gibbon, sought, at least, to model her life after the pattern of Miranda. In 1740 Law retired to his native place, King's Cliffe, and three years later was followed by Miss Gibbon and by a Mrs. Hutcheson, a wealthy widow, whose husband, in dying, had commissioned Mr. Law to be her trustee and spiritual director. In this singular household the rules laid down in the *Serious Call* were observed as closely as possible—the early rising, the frequent services, the continual giving of alms. Their combined income amounted to £3000 a year. Of this they spent £2700 in charity, reserving only £300 for their own use. The manner of their almsgiving was in defiance of all laws of political economy, was so profuse and indiscriminate as to attract beggars from all quarters. The inhabitants of the village loudly expressed their dissatisfaction, and the well-meaning trio were even denounced from the pulpit by the rector of the parish. By degrees, however, they seem to have been better understood; the wrath of the rector was appeased, and they worked in harmony with him.

A considerable modification had taken place in the views of Law, owing to his acquaintance with the works of the German mystic, Jacob Behmen. To Law they were as a revelation from heaven, though to some people the comment of Dr. Johnson may appear to be nearer the mark: "Law fell latterly into the reveries of Jacob

Behmen, whom Law alleged to have been somewhat in the same state with St. Paul, and to have seen unutterable things. Were it even so, Jacob would have resembled St. Paul still more by not attempting to utter them." The purely mystical statements regarding the properties of nature and the fallen angels which Law introduced into his writings will be of interest only to a few; but such passages may be skipped without much detriment to his meaning, and it must be confessed that, apart from these, the spiritual power and insight of his later works have never been surpassed. *The Spirit of Prayer: or, The Soul Rising out of the Vanity of Time into the Riches of Eternity*, for example, is partly thrown into the form of a dialogue, in which there is little dramatic skill, and every now and again the reader is stumbled by the assertion of strange speculations, as if they were positive certainties; but constantly also there are passages of marvellous loftiness and beauty.

Law had correspondents in all walks of life, and was ready to help with his counsel all those who consulted him. His views were so strange for the time at which they were promulgated, that he was engaged in controversy with men of nearly all schools—with Bishop Warburton and Bishop Hoadley, with Wesley and Newton, with Quakers and Moravian Brethren, Deists and Freethinkers. The evidences of Christianity which at that time were chiefly discussed by friends and foes were the external evidences; but it was the internal which Law insisted on putting in the foreground. The Inner Light, the Christ in us, formed the burden of his teaching. But he was emphatic in denying that he had any thought of undervaluing the Scriptures or the historical Christ.

> Let no one here think to charge me with disregard to the Holy Jesus, who was born of the Virgin Mary, or with setting up an inward Saviour in opposition to that outward Christ whose history

is recorded in the Gospel. . . . Was I to say that a plant or vegetable must have the sun within it, must have the life, light, and virtues of the sun incorporated in it, that it has no benefit from the sun till the sun is thus inwardly forwarding, generating, quickening, and raising up a life of the sun's virtues in it, would this be setting up an inward sun in opposition to the outward one? . . . Is not all that is here said of an inward sun in the vegetable so much said of a power and virtue derived from the sun in the firmament? So, in like manner, all that is said of an inward Christ, inwardly formed and generated in the root of the soul, is only so much said of an inward life, brought forth by the power and efficacy of that blessed Christ that was born of the Virgin Mary.[1]

Law's last work was *An Humble, Earnest, and Affectionate Address to the Clergy*. He was seventy-five years of age, but his style is as clear and forcible as ever. He did not live to see the book in type. A few days after he had finished writing it, in Easter week 1761, he caught cold, and on April 9 he died. "His deathbed," wrote Miss Gibbon, "instead of being a state of affliction, was providentially a state of divine transport. . . . After taking leave of everybody in the most affectionate manner, and declaring the opening of the spirit of love in the soul to be all in all, he expired in divine raptures," singing with a strong and clear voice, almost with his latest breath, a hymn called the "Angel's Hymn."

There is much in the teaching of Law which we might be disposed to combat or to modify. For some he insisted too much on the outer organisation of the Church and the necessity of Episcopal ordination; for others he leant too much on internal inspiration. He depreciated reason and learning; he was too ascetic in his conception of life; he inculcated self-crucifixion too persistently as a work to be achieved without sufficient reference to the motives by which it should be prompted; he showed the folly of a worldly life, rather than won men to a heavenly

[1] *Spirit of Prayer*, Part I. chap. i.

life by the proclamation of the Gospel. But all will benefit by the perusal of his books, especially the *Serious Call*, *Christian Perfection*, and *The Spirit of Prayer*. The vanity of the pursuits to which we are apt to give ourselves, the futility of bearing the Christian name unless one is seeking to lead the Christian life, the tremendous reality of the unseen and eternal, will be impressed upon the mind with a vividness which we shall have difficulty in finding elsewhere. And as we read his urgent appeals, his persuasive arguments, his cutting irony, his indignant invective, his spiritual aspirations, his heavenly communings, we rise up with the conviction that we shall do well to obey the advice with which one of his treatises concludes: "Think, my friends, of these things with something more than thoughts; let your hungry souls eat of the nourishment of them, as a bread of heaven, and desire only to live that, with all the working of your wills and the whole spirit of your minds, you may live and die united to God. And thus let this conversation end, till God gives us another meeting."[1]

CHAPTER XXI

JOHN WESLEY

1703–1791

A MAN in learning and sincere piety, scarcely inferior to any; in zeal, ministerial labours, and extensive usefulness, superior (perhaps) to all men since the days of St. Paul. Regardless of fatigue, personal danger, and disgrace, he went out into the highways and hedges, calling sinners to repentance, and preaching the Gospel of Peace. He was the founder of the Methodist Societies, and the patron and friend of the lay preachers, by whose aid he extended

[1] *Spirit of Prayer*, Part II., second dialogue.

the plan of itinerant preaching through Great Britain and Ireland, the West Indies, and America, with unexampled success. He was born June 17, 1703, and died March 2, 1791, in sure and certain hope of Eternal Life, through the Atonement and Mediation of a crucified Saviour. He was sixty-five years in the ministry, and fifty-two an itinerant preacher; he lived to see in these kingdoms only, about three hundred itinerant and one thousand local preachers, raised up from the midst of his own people; and eighty thousand persons in the societies under his care. His name will ever be had in grateful remembrance by all who rejoice in the universal spread of the Gospel of Christ.

So is John Wesley described in one of his epitaphs; and when everything is taken into account the description scarcely seems to be exaggerated. He was, in some respects, the greatest personal religious force of the eighteenth century; the movement which he inaugurated has not spent itself, but has gone on increasing ever since.

Although there are very marked crises in Wesley's life, it must be remembered that he was religiously brought up; that he was, in a very true sense, dedicated to Christ from his infancy. It has been said that he received the Communion when he was only eight years of age; whether because of his parents' wish, or of his own, seems uncertain. In any case it is an evidence of the impression which, as a child, he must have made. No record of dissipation or even of idleness has been preserved against him. He early attained a marvellous faculty of redeeming his time, which all through his life he maintained, and which proved one of the most evident reasons of the extraordinary amount of work which he was able to overtake. Both at school and at Oxford he was diligent and studious. In 1725, at the age of twenty-two, after undergoing a period of considerable doubt as to the course which he should pursue, he became a clergyman. The books which, next to the Bible, at this time possessed the greatest fascination for him were *The Imitation of Christ*,

and Jeremy Taylor's *Holy Living* and *Holy Dying*. In 1726 he was elected a Fellow of Lincoln College, and remained at Oxford till 1734, acting for most of the time as tutor and lecturer. It was also during that time that Methodism, technically so-called, may be said to have begun. He and several like-minded friends formed themselves into a society for the study of the Greek Testament, and for increasing the spirit of devotion. Among these friends were his brother Charles, George Whitefield, and James Hervey, author of *Meditations among the Tombs*. Very soon they arrived at the conclusion that they ought not to content themselves with fostering their own spiritual life, but that they must seek to do good to others. They set themselves to visit the poor in their houses, and the prisoners in the castle; they gave help to the destitute; they sent neglected children to school; they distributed Bibles and Prayer-books. This was all done, so far as can be ascertained, very modestly and quietly, without any obtrusiveness, and with the full sanction of the Bishop of the Diocese. Yet it was not long before they found themselves the objects of virulent abuse, and were accused of trying to turn the world upside down. They were nicknamed "The Holy Club," or "Methodists." This latter name was given to them because of the way in which they systematically arranged their life, doing everything by rule. The word "Methodist" in its origin therefore means something different from what people who use it disparagingly commonly attribute to it. It is employed as identical with fanaticism, or with a religion of impulse and excitement. That there might be fanaticism, that there certainly was excitement, associated with the progress of the movement, is undoubted, but the name itself speaks of the very reverse—speaks of calmness and deliberateness in the management of the religious life.

Wesley's career at Oxford came to an end through an offer which was made to him that he should go to the colony of Georgia as a clergyman, to minister to the colonists, and act as a missionary among the Indians. After considerable hesitation, and acting on the advice of friends, he accepted the duty. It does not need to be said that he laboured with great earnestness, but it was not the work for which he was best suited. From his own temperament, or from the special difficulties of the situation, he found his labours practically useless. But for himself he never regretted that he had gone; his visit to Georgia marked an epoch in his spiritual history. He met with Moravian missionaries on his outward voyage, and from them learned aspects of truth which he had not hitherto contemplated, and which were henceforward to be very prominent in his teaching. It is probable therefore that the ineffectiveness of his labours in Georgia was caused partly by the conflict which was going on in his own mind, as well as by obstacles which were peculiar to the colony itself. He returned to England in about two years; and the day that he landed on its shores he wrote: "It is now two years and almost four months since I left my native country in order to teach the Georgia Indians the nature of Christianity; but what have I learned of myself in the meantime? Why, what I least suspected; that I, who went to America to convert others, was myself never converted to God! I am not mad though I thus speak; but I speak the words of truth and soberness."

In London he met with a devout Moravian, Peter Böhler, under whose influence he attained to a light and a peace which he had not known before. He began to preach in many pulpits of London the truth which he had lately grasped, but encountered very strong opposition. He went for a short time to the Moravian settlement

in Germany, and when he came back, as pulpits were frequently refused to him, he began to preach in the open air. From that time onwards, about fifty-three years, he continued to pursue the same course, preaching incessantly wherever he was permitted. Nor was he simply an evangelist. He did not merely seek to rouse people from indifference and sin, and then go away and leave them; he developed a marvellous system whereby these good impressions might be retained, and those who were sympathetic might help and encourage one another. "To unite," as has been said, "his people in one body, to give every one something to do, to make each one consider his neighbour and seek his edification, to call forth latent talent and utilise it in some direction, to keep 'all at it and always at it' (to adopt his quaint saying), these were his aims and objects."

The work which he sought to accomplish was therefore, in the right sense of the word, not in the contemptuous sense sometimes attached to it, well entitled to be called Methodism. No man could be more possessed by the idea of the necessity of discipline than Wesley. He proclaimed, indeed, as few have ever proclaimed, the need of regeneration and of the grace of the Holy Spirit in order to do anything well-pleasing in the sight of God. But, at the same time, he inculcated as resolutely as he could have done, even in the days when he would afterwards have described himself as being under the law and not under grace, minute details which must be observed by every one belonging to the society which he had founded. He laid down rules regarding food, dress, style of living, expenditure of one's income. On two points he especially insisted, as needful for those who would be genuine disciples. One was early rising; nothing in his opinion was more prejudicial to the spiritual life than intemperance in sleep; nothing more hindered "those blessed

influences which tend to make one not almost, but altogether a Christian." Another point on which he laid great stress was the frank statement in meetings of one's spiritual condition and experience; this, he held, would save people from lethargy and indifference, would compel them to self-examination.

He held very strong views as to the need of continually probing and rousing the soul, and thus enforced the rule which to this hour prevails in the Wesleyan Communion, that no preacher shall on any consideration remain longer than three years in one charge. "I know," he said, "were I myself to preach one whole year in one place, I should preach both myself and most of my congregation asleep. Nor can I ever believe it was ever the will of the Lord that any congregation should have one teacher only. We have found, by long and constant experience, that a frequent change of teachers is best. . . . For fifty years God has been pleased to bless the itinerant plan, the last year most of all; it must not be altered till I am removed, and I hope it will remain till our Lord comes to reign upon the earth." Such a system, while evidently fitted to rouse and stimulate, is not so evidently fitted to instruct and build up; and, probably, in order to remedy this defect, Wesley paid extraordinary attention to the forming of classes in which religious life and doctrine should be fostered. He always put earnestness in the first place as a qualification for his preachers; but he invariably inculcated upon them that there was no connection between piety and ignorance, and that, if they would be true teachers, they must be of studious habits. "Your talent in preaching," he wrote to one of them, "does not increase; it is just the same as it was seven years ago. It is lively, but not deep; there is little variety; there is no compass of thought. Reading only can supply this, with daily meditation and daily prayer.

You wrong yourself greatly by omitting this; you never can be a deep preacher without it, any more than a thorough Christian. O begin! Fix some part of every day for private exercises. You may acquire the taste which you have not; what is tedious at first will afterwards be pleasant. Whether you like it or not, read and pray daily. It is for your life! There is no other way; else you will be a trifler all your days, and a pretty superficial preacher. Do justice to your own soul; give it time and means to grow; do not starve yourself any longer."

So he himself persevered to his dying day, assiduous not only in private devotion, and in declaring the Gospel of Christ to all who would hear, but also utilising his spare moments in the cultivation of knowledge. "History, poetry, and philosophy," he said, "I commonly read on horseback, having other employment at other times."

He died after a short illness on March 2, 1791. Not long before the end, having vainly tried to utter some words of greeting to a friend who came to see him, he summoned his remaining strength and twice cried out in a clear voice, "The best of all is, God is with us." That night he could only repeat the words, "I'll praise, I'll praise"; and at ten o'clock in the morning, having murmured "Farewell," he fell asleep. In order to prevent great crowds assembling, his funeral took place between five and six in the morning; but even at that early hour hundreds of people assembled to do honour to his memory. One who had been associated with him for thirty years read the Burial Service, and when he came to the words, "Forasmuch as it hath pleased Almighty God to take unto Himself the soul of our dear *brother*," his voice faltered, and he used the word *father* instead, with such unaffected emotion that the whole assemblage burst forth into audible weeping.

Wesley had undoubted faults; like other men who have attained similar positions of influence in the Church and in the world, he was not adapted for bearing opposition; he was born to rule; and when others did not yield to him, he did not long associate with them. We may also regret that his main influence should remain in a separate Communion. It is the custom to lay all the blame on the authorities of the Church of England, and to say that with a little more wisdom they could have retained him and his followers. There may be some truth in this; but honestly, if we consider the times, the wonder almost is that so much forbearance was extended to him so long. Nor must it be forgotten that he was not driven from the Church of England, neither did he himself leave her; he died in her communion; he died a clergyman of the Church of England, and he undoubtedly desired that his followers should not forsake her. But the laws and regulations which he left were such as practically to nullify his own earnest wish, and to bring about the result which he deprecated.

All these things, however, cannot hinder us from giving thanks for a man so consecrated to the service of his Lord and Master; and all sections of the Christian Church can unite in thinking of him with gratitude and reverence. His literary labours were hardly less prodigious than his evangelistic. His writings are remarkable for their sobriety, their moderation, and their scholarly tone. It was the common people that he habitually addressed, but he sensitively shrank from everything rude and uncultivated. His exclamation on visiting the ruins of Arbroath Abbey, "God deliver us from reforming mobs!" was characteristic of his whole career. His *Journal* abounds in shrewd comments on men and things as well as in devout aspiration and spiritual insight. Above all, he found time to issue, in

fifty volumes, *A Christian Library, consisting of Extracts from, and Abridgments of, the Choicest Pieces of Practical Divinity which have been published in the English Tongue.* His endeavour was to extract from "the immense variety," "the endless multiplicity," "the huge mingled mass" of religious books such a collection of English divinity as should, in his belief, be "all true, all agreeable, to the oracles of God, all practical, unmixed with controversy of every kind, and all intelligible to plain men; not superficial, but going down to the depth and describing the height of Christianity; and yet not mystical, not obscure to any of those who are experienced in the ways of God." If he did not succeed in his aim, it was because nobody could be wholly successful in a scheme so comprehensive and gigantic.

CHAPTER XXII

GEORGE WHITEFIELD

1714–1770

George Whitefield was born at Gloucester in 1714. When he was two years old his father died. His mother kept the Bell Inn, which did not prosper too well. Whitefield was very early imbued with religious sentiments, but his practice was scarcely in accordance with them. "I had early some convictions of sin, and once I remember, when some persons (as they frequently did) made it their business to tease me, I immediately retired to my room, and kneeling down with many tears, prayed over that Psalm wherein David so often repeats these words: 'But in the name of the Lord will I destroy them.' I was always fond of being a clergyman, used frequently

to imitate the ministers reading prayers, etc. Part of the money I used to steal from my parent I gave to the poor, and some books I privately took from others (for which I have since restored fourfold), I remember were books of devotion."[1]

At the Free Grammar School which he attended at Gloucester, he was remarkable for his retentive memory and his elocution; and used to be chosen to make speeches before the Corporation at their annual visitation of the school.

His mother's circumstances being straitened, he began when fifteen years of age to assist her in the public-house. "I put on my blue apron and my snuffers, washed mops, cleansed rooms, and in one word became a professed and common drawer." This occupation was after a time distasteful to him, and he went to live with a brother at Bristol. His thirst for knowledge, and his religious convictions, although somewhat spasmodic, continued to grow. "One of my brothers used to tell me he feared this would not hold long, and that I should forget all when I came to Oxford."

For to Oxford by the kindness of some friends who were interested in him, and discerned his abilities, he was enabled to go in his eighteenth year. He entered Pembroke Hall as a Servitor, and found that his experiences as a drawer in the Bell Inn were of great use. He was exceedingly punctilious in religious observances, and practised the utmost self-denial. He always chose the worst sort of food; he fasted twice a week; his apparel was mean. He thought it unbecoming to have his hair powdered. He wore woollen gloves, a patched gown, and dirty shoes.

[1] *A Short Account of God's Dealings with the Rev. Mr. George Whitefield, A.B., late of Pembroke College, Oxford, from his Infancy to the Time of his Entering into Holy Orders,* 1740; revised in 1756.

He became acquainted with John and Charles Wesley and their friends, whose devotional customs were at this time beginning to earn for them the derisive name of Methodists. A distinct epoch in his life was marked by his reading of Scougal's *Life of God in the Soul of Man*, lent him by Charles Wesley. "At my first reading it, I wondered what the author meant by saying, 'That some falsely placed religion in going to church, doing hurt to no one, being constant in the duties of secret prayer, and reaching out their hands to give alms to their poor neighbours.' Alas! thought I, if this be not religion, what is? God soon showed me, for on reading a few lines further that 'true religion was an union of the soul with God, a Christ formed within us,' a ray of divine light instantaneously darted in upon my soul, and from that moment, but not till then, did I know that I must be a new creature."

Very soon the depression under which he had laboured departed. "The weight of sin fell off; and an abiding sense of the pardoning love of God, and a full assurance of faith, broke in upon my disconsolate soul. . . . At first my joys were like a spring-tide, and as it were overflowed the banks. Go where I would I could not avoid singing of psalms almost aloud."

On leaving Oxford, he returned to Gloucester, and was ordained deacon. His name had been brought before Dr. Benson, the Bishop of Gloucester, who was so much struck with Whitefield's appearance and character, that he insisted on breaking a rule to which he had hitherto adhered, of admitting no man to deacon's orders before the age of twenty-three. Whitefield was barely twenty-two, and was excessively reluctant to be ordained before he had spent more time in study and meditation. "I have prayed a thousand times till the sweat has dropped from my face like rain, that God of His infinite

mercy would not let me enter the Church till He called me to, and thrust me forth in, His work. . . . I wrote to all my friends in town and country to pray against the bishop's solicitation, but they insisted I should go into orders before I was twenty-two. After all their solicitations, these words came into my mind: 'Nothing shall pluck you out of my hands'; they came warm to my heart. Then, and not till then, I said, 'Lord, I *will* go; send me when Thou wilt.'"

His first sermon was preached in the Church of St. Mary de Crypt, the church in which he had been baptized and had first received the Holy Communion. The sight of the large congregation made him nervous. "As I proceeded, I perceived the fire kindled, till at last, though so young, and amidst a crowd of those who knew me in my childish days, I trust I was enabled to speak with some degree of Gospel authority. Some few mocked, but most seemed for the present struck; and I have since heard that a complaint was made to the bishop that I drove fifteen mad the first sermon. The worthy prelate wished that the madness might not be forgotten before next Sunday."

Thus began the public career of in some respects the most remarkable preacher of modern times. From that day, whenever or wherever he preached, crowds flocked to hear him. In London, constables had to be in attendance to prevent the disasters which might have been caused by unseemly and violent crushing to get into the churches in which he was officiating.

At the suggestion of the Wesleys, he set sail for Georgia, to assist in the care of an Orphan House near Savannah. The influence which he exercised on board ship during the four months' voyage was amazing. Officers and crew and passengers were alike submissive. He preached continually, and effected a wonderful

reformation in the language and customs of the company. He abated the drunkenness which prevailed; and on one occasion he seized and threw overboard the cards of those who were gambling. He wielded an authority against which there appeared to be no appeal. The ship lay at Gibraltar for a short time on the way out. Whitefield went ashore and produced a deep impression on the garrison. He found there some preparation for his preaching. There were at least two societies for prayer and study of the Scriptures. One of these societies was composed of persons belonging to the Church of England, and its members were derisively called "New Lights." Another of these societies was composed of persons belonging to the Church of Scotland, and its members were yet more derisively called "Dark Lanthorns."

Whitefield's first visit to America lasted only four months. He returned to England partly on business connected with the Orphanage, and partly to obtain priest's orders. He found himself received with much coldness. The matter and manner of his preaching were so different from the preaching which was prevalent, that the clergy, with few exceptions, would not admit him to their pulpits. This, as well as other reasons, led him to adopt open-air preaching. His first attempt was made at Kingswood, near Bristol, in February 1739, when he was twenty-four years old. His congregation when he began consisted of about a hundred miners, but before he had finished it numbered many thousands. A few months later he preached in the open air in London. He had begun the service in a church in Islington, when the churchwardens came and demanded his license for preaching in the diocese. As he could not produce it on the spot, they would not allow him to proceed, and he therefore after service betook himself to the churchyard, where a large congregation speedily assembled.

From this time he preached continually in the open air whenever he had an opportunity of doing so with advantage. But while the people flocked to hear him, he found himself more and more alone in the Church of England. His method of work excited extraordinary interest, both in attack and defence. A whole literature, for and against him, made its appearance. He undoubtedly in various ways laid himself open to criticism. His remarks about the clergy who would not ask him into their pulpits were sometimes censorious and frequently imprudent. He did speak of his own labours in a fashion which was occasionally bombastic and egotistical. It was not merely that ferocious controversialists like Bishop Warburton denounced him; it was not merely that Dr. Johnson said: "His popularity, sir, is chiefly owing to the peculiarity of his manner. He would be followed by crowds, were he to wear a night-cap in the pulpit, and were he to preach from a tree." But even the devout Nonconformist divines, Isaac Watts and Philip Doddridge, were at first inclined to think that he was "weak and presumptuous," and spoke too much as if he claimed to be directly inspired. On the other hand, there exists sufficient unimpeachable testimony as to his marvellous power. Men so devoid of emotion as David Hume, Lord Bolingbroke, Lord Chesterfield, and Benjamin Franklin spoke of him with admiration. Hume said it was worth going twenty miles to hear him. Bolingbroke declared, "He has the most commanding eloquence I ever heard in any person." Chesterfield grew so absorbed as Whitefield described a blind beggar deserted by his dog, drawing near the edge of a precipice, that he sprang to his feet in forgetfulness of his actual surroundings, and cried out in anguish, "He is gone; he is gone!" And the calm and clear-headed Franklin relates: "I happened to attend one of his sermons, in the course of which I

perceived he intended to finish with a collection, and I silently resolved he should get nothing from me. I had in my pocket a handful of copper money, three or four silver dollars, and five pistoles in gold. As he proceeded I began to soften, and concluded to give the copper. Another stroke of his oratory made me ashamed of that, and determined me to give the silver; and he finished so admirably that I emptied my pocket wholly into the collector's dish, gold and all."

His labours as an evangelist were, in as literal a sense as it is possible to use the word, "unceasing." He preached no fewer than 18,000 times; but of course he repeated the same sermons over and over again. He is credited with saying that none of his sermons were worth anything till he had preached them forty times. He paid fourteen visits to Scotland, one to Ireland, and seven to America; while there was not a county in England and Wales in which he had not addressed meetings.

His experiences of Scotland were strange. It is frequently asserted that the Church of Scotland in the eighteenth century was utterly dead, and that the only religious life which the country could show had to be sought for in the seceders from her fold. We are therefore astonished to learn that Whitefield's welcome in Scotland came not from the seceders, but from the Church. It was indeed by the Erskines that he was first of all invited to visit the country. But when he would not agree to preach only for them, their enthusiasm cooled. There is extant quite a voluminous correspondence between Whitefield and Ebenezer Erskine, and the manner in which Erskine wished to confine Whitefield's ministrations simply to "God's people," in other words, to the seceders and their friends, would be amusing were it not mournful. In November 1748, six hundred

followers of Erskine met in Edinburgh, and swore to observe the League and Covenant, solemnly engaging to strengthen one another's hands in the use of lawful means to extirpate "Popery, Prelacy, Arminianism, Arianism, Sabellianism, and George Whitefieldism."

The methods of Whitefield's work, the revivals at Cambuslang and Kilsyth, marvellous though they were, did not meet with universal approval in the Church of Scotland. Still it was by her ministers that he was encouraged, and by their help it was that he produced an impression so deep and wide. "In 1748, the Lord High Commissioner to the General Assembly not only attended his ministrations, and invited him to his house, but introduced him to his public table during the session of the Assembly."

In America, also, Whitefield had to endure much opposition; and Congregationalist ministers were ardent in their denunciations. The worst thing which we can lay to the charge of Whitefield was not regarded as a grievous fault in his own day. He gave direct encouragement to the slave trade.

His death was in beautiful accordance with his life. "It had been a saying of his: 'I shall die silent; it has pleased God to enable me to bear so many testimonies to Him during my life, that He will require none from me when I die.' And so it came to pass." He was going from Portsmouth to Newbury Port, and was asked to preach at Exeter on the way. Before he began, a friend said, "You are more fit to go to bed than to preach." "True, sir," said Whitefield; then he prayed, "Lord Jesus, I am weary *in* Thy work, but not *of* Thy work. If I have not yet finished my course, let me go and speak for Thee once more in the fields, seal Thy truth, and come home and die." He preached in a field for two hours to an immense concourse. Near the close of the sermon

he exclaimed: "I go; I go to a rest prepared; my sun has given light to many, but now it is about to set; no, to rise to the zenith of immortal glory. How willingly would I live for ever to preach Christ. But I die to be with Him. How brief, comparatively brief, has been my life compared to the vast labours which I see before me yet to be accomplished. But if I leave now, while so few care about heavenly things, the God of Peace will surely visit you." Next morning, September 30, 1770, he had passed away.

Whitefield was not a scholar, a critic, a theologian, or great organiser. He was emphatically a preacher. This one thing he did, and he did it with all his might. His simplicity, his pathos, his dramatic faculty, his overwhelming earnestness, carried away every auditory that he addressed. The power of his preaching lay in his personality. A perusal of his sermons leaves the reader in wonder as to the secret of their amazing popularity, although the common saying that there is nothing in them is far from justified. But, apart from his sermons, the *Short Account* which he gives of his early life is worthy of study, and entitles him to rank among religious writers. Faults, as we have seen, may be discerned in him—faults that lay on the surface; but when we take all things into account, we have no hesitation in pronouncing him to be one of the most single-minded, devoted, unselfish, genuine men who ever preached the Gospel of Christ. His faults he acknowledged, and, as years went on, he rose above them.

> Leuconomos (beneath well-sounding Greek
> I slur a name a poet must not speak)
> Stood pilloried on Infamy's high stage,
> And bore the pelting scorn of half an age,
> The very butt of Slander, and the blot
> For every dart that Malice ever shot.
> . . . . .

Assailed by scandal and the tongue of strife,
His only answer was a blameless life.

. . . . .

He followed Paul ; his zeal a kindred flame,
His apostolic charity the same ;
Like him, crossed cheerfully tempestuous seas,
Forsaking country, kindred, friends, and ease ;
Like him he laboured, and, like him, content
To bear it, suffered shame where'er he went.
Blush, Calumny ! and write upon his tomb,
If honest eulogy can spare thee room,
Thy deep repentance of thy thousand lies,
Which, aimed at him, have pierced the offended skies ;
And say, Blot out my sin, confessed, deplored,
Against Thine image in Thy saint, O Lord ![1]

CHAPTER XXIII

JOHN NEWTON—WILLIAM COWPER—JAMES HERVEY—THOMAS SCOTT

1713–1821

I. Among the religious writers of this period, or indeed of any period, none had a more adventurous career than John Newton. As a boy he went to sea with his father, who was the master of a merchant vessel. The impressions which the teaching of his mother made upon him were never wholly effaced. Although he expressed sceptical opinions, he was subject to fits of religious depression. His romantic love for a young girl, Mary Catlett, led him on one occasion to let the ship by which he ought to have sailed go off without him. But the course of his true love did not run smooth. He was captured by a press-gang, and forced to take service in the navy. After a time he was permitted to exchange into a merchant ship

[1] W. Cowper, *Hope.*

bound for Africa. On the Gold Coast he became the overseer of a slave depot. The unhappy creatures under his supervision were more kindly treated than he was himself treated by a brutal taskmaster. He could hardly have existed but for the relief which he found in tracing mathematical diagrams on the sand. Another slave-dealer took him into partnership, and brighter days began. "I was decently clothed and lived in plenty; business flourished, and our employer was satisfied, and here I began to be wretch enough to think myself happy. In the language of the country the white man was growing black." He was indeed so contented in this position that when an opportunity of returning to England was placed within his reach, it was with difficulty that he could be persuaded to embrace it. He afterwards returned several times to Africa as master of a slave-trading ship. The fact that he had married the object of his early affection, and that the religious impressions of his childhood were now deepened, did not apparently make him conscious of the incongruity of his calling.

> Old ocean probably never before or since floated such another slave-ship. On board of her, indeed, were to be seen all the ordinary phenomena. Packed together like herrings, stifled, sick, and broken-hearted, the negroes in that aquatic Pandemonium died after making futile attempts at insurrection. But separated by a single plank from his victims, the voice of their gaoler might be heard, day by day, conducting the prayers of his ship's company, . . . and, as he assures us, experiencing on his last voyage to Guinea sweeter and more frequent hours of divine communion than he had ever elsewhere known.

His religious impressions were deepened by his acquaintance with George Whitefield, which he made on a voyage to America. Illness obliged him to give up the seafaring life, and he obtained a situation in connection with the Customs at Liverpool. His leisure time was devoted to the study of the Scriptures and of theology. In 1764

he took orders in the Church of England, and was appointed to the curacy of Olney in Buckinghamshire. There he laboured for sixteen years. He was an untiring parish clergyman, and he published several devotional works, including a *Review of Ecclesiastical History*. But his residence at Olney is mainly memorable because of his close friendship with William Cowper, and the share which he had in the composition of the Olney hymns. There could not be a greater contrast than between the sensitive recluse who painfully shrank from observation and "the straightforward sailor who, with a skin as thick as the copper sheathing of his ship, laid bare the recesses of his conscience with as little squeamishness as he would have thrown open her hold and overhauled her cargo." It is commonly assumed that the views of Newton were grim and narrow, and that to his extreme Calvinism may be largely traced the melancholy of Cowper. As a matter of fact, when we take into account the experiences through which he had passed, and the school with which he was identified, he was wonderfully free from austerity.

It is to Newton that we owe not a few of the hymns which have become the property of the Universal Church: "Approach, my soul, the mercy-seat," "Glorious things of thee are spoken," "How sweet the Name of Jesus sounds." The hymns which Newton composed are not inferior to those of Cowper, and are not readily to be distinguished from them; although, in the judgment of Lord Selborne, Cowper's are mainly characterised by "tenderness," and Newton's by "manliness." This note of "manliness" may be observed in all Newton's works. There is no mawkish sentiment about them. The letters of spiritual counsel, *Cardiphonia*, which he also wrote at Olney, although they were not published until he had left it, are remarkable for their robust

common-sense as well as for their sympathetic acquaintance with various spiritual phases. He believed that he had a special aptitude for spiritual analysis.

But he was no morbid dissector either of the heart of others or of his own. It has occasioned surprise that one who was so thoroughly changed, who could not look back upon much of his past life without grave disapproval, and who was sincerely repentant, should yet be so uniformly cheerful, and should have made the transition with so little of the violent emotion by which such a change is usually accompanied. "I know not," he writes to a correspondent, "that I ever had those awful views of sin which you speak of; and though I believe I should be better for them, I dare not seriously wish for them. There is a petition which I have heard in public prayer, 'Lord, show us the evil of our hearts.' To this petition I cannot venture to set my Amen, at least, not without a qualification. 'Show me enough of Thyself to balance the view, and then show me what Thou pleasest.'"

He warns a brother clergyman against the mistake of preaching too loudly and too long.

> There is still in being an old-fashioned instrument called an hour-glass, which, in days of yore, before clocks and watches abounded, used to be the measure of many a good sermon, and I think it a tolerable stint. If an angel was to preach for two hours, unless his hearers were angels likewise, I believe the greater part of them would wish he had done. It is a shame it should be so; but so it is, . . . and when weariness begins, edification ends. Perhaps it is better to feed our people like chickens, a little and often, than to cram them like turkeys till they cannot hold one gobbet more. Besides, overlong sermons break in upon family concerns, and often call off thoughts from the sermon to the pudding at home, which is in danger of being over-boiled.

The intense fervour of Newton was accompanied by a singular tolerance.

I am not indeed an advocate for that indifference and lukewarmness to the truths of God which seem to constitute the candour many plead for in the present day. But while I desire to hold fast the sound doctrines of the Gospel, towards the persons of my fellow-creatures I wish to exercise all moderation and benevolence ; Protestants or Papists, Socinians or Deists, Jews, Samaritans or Mahometans, all are my neighbours, they have all a claim upon me for the common offices of humanity. As to religion, they cannot all be right, nor may I compliment them by allowing the differences between us are but trivial, when I believe and know they are important, but I am not to expect them to see with my eyes.

The best are but men ; the wisest may be mistaken ; and that which may be right in another might be wrong in me, through a difference of circumstances. The Spirit of God distributes variously, both in gifts and dispensations ; and I would no more be tied to act strictly by others' rules than to walk in shoes of the same size. My shoes must fit my own feet. I endeavour to guard against extremes ; our nature is prone to them ; and we are liable, likewise, when we have found the inconvenience of one extreme, to revert insensibly (sometimes to fly suddenly) to the other. I pray to be led in the midst of the path. I am what they call a Calvinist, yet there are flights, niceties, and hard sayings to be found among some of that system which I do not choose to imitate.

In 1780 he became Rector of St. Mary Woolnoth, London. His preaching is said to have been somewhat dull ; but the influence which he exercised, partly through correspondence, and partly through gatherings at his own house, was marvellous. He held a weekly meeting at which the more or less eminent men and women of the Evangelical School, "parsons, parsonets, and parsonettas," as he himself humorously termed them, were to be found. His house was always open, and was the resort of visitors from all quarters desiring guidance on the spiritual life. While strength lasted, he would not cease to teach and to preach. "What," he said to those who suggested to him in his old age that he might

retire, "shall the old African blasphemer stop while he can speak?" He died in 1807, in his eighty-third year; and in accordance with his own instructions there was erected in the Church of St. Mary Woolnoth a plain marble tablet having the inscription: "John Newton, Clerk, once an infidel, and libertine, a servant of slaves in Africa, was, by the rich mercy of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, preserved, restored, pardoned, and appointed to preach the faith he had long laboured to destroy."

II. From a purely literary standpoint, the greatest of the writers produced by the Evangelical Revival was the shy recluse so strangely associated with Newton at Olney. The awful melancholy of William Cowper is generally attributed to his religion. It would be more correct to say that his religion was the one thing which made life endurable, and gave him a ray of hope amid the darkness by which he was encompassed.

> I was a stricken deer that left the herd,

so he pathetically describes himself—

> Long since; with many an arrow deep enfixed
> My panting side was charged, when I withdrew
> To seek a tranquil death in distant shades.
> There was I found by One who had Himself
> Been hurt by the archers. In His side He bore,
> And in His hands and feet, the cruel scars,
> With gentle force soliciting the darts
> He drew them forth and healed and bade me live.

It was as a relief from depression that he began to write. "Despair made amusement necessary, and I found poetry the most agreeable amusement." But he made it his definite aim that his own "amusement" should contribute to the public welfare. He wrote with the distinct aim of "reclaiming a vicious age."

I, who scribble rhyme
To catch the triflers of the time
And tell them truths divine and clear
Which, couched in prose, they will not hear.

It was his lament that the poets of the age devoted their energies to inferior themes, and that the highest of all was left unsung.

Pity Religion has so seldom found
A skilful guide into poetic ground !—
. . . . . .
'Twere new indeed to see a bard all fire,
Touched with a coal from heaven, assume the lyre,
And tell the world, still kindling as he sung,
With more than mortal music on his tongue,
That He who died below and reigns above
Inspires the song, and that His Name is Love.

The Evangelical School is held to have depreciated Nature, to have regarded it as a dangerous rival of the Gospel. It should not be forgotten that by a member of that school the love of Nature was rekindled. The glory of the visible creation was as dear to Cowper as to Wordsworth. It was Cowper who led men again to take an interest in woods and dales and streams. He was the poet of nature and of simplicity. His writings were a reaction alike against the absorption in the world of fashion and convention which had prevailed since Pope ruled, and against the artificial manner in which Pope wrote. Pope, according to Cowper, had made poetry "a mere mechanic art, and every warbler had his tune by heart." Cowper avoided the world of fashion and convention. For him it was scarcely an exaggeration to say, "God made the country and man made the town." He sang the praises of Nature in language of almost rugged simplicity. Pope had spoken of looking "through Nature up to Nature's God," but the poems of Cowper

had this main and definite aim. It was not of Nature as a vague abstraction that he sang; it was of Nature as declaring the glory of God; and the God whose glory it declared was He who had been made manifest in Christ.

> One spirit, His
> Who wore the platted thorns with bleeding brows,
> Rules universal Nature.

III. James Hervey, son of the Rector of Weston Favell and Collingtree, near Northampton, was born in 1713. He was educated at the Grammar School of Northampton, where he was remarkable both for his diligence in study and for his skill in games. He would have made, it is said, even greater progress in his studies, had it not been for the jealousy of the schoolmaster, who objected to any of his pupils "learning quicker than his own son"! At Oxford Hervey came under the influence of Wesley. They were afterwards separated by differences of opinion, but continued to preserve mutual esteem. "I heartily thank you," Hervey wrote in later years, "as for all other favours, so especially for teaching me Hebrew. I can never forget that tender-hearted and generous Fellow of Lincoln who condescended to take such compassionate notice of a poor undergraduate whom almost everybody contemned, and whose soul no man cared for." The deepest religious impression was produced on Hervey by George Whitefield, although for a time the doctrines which Whitefield proclaimed were as distasteful to Hervey as the same doctrines propounded by John Newton should yet be to Thomas Scott. Hervey himself considered that a conversation with a ploughman labouring in the fields was the main instrument of his conversion from "legal" to evangelical belief. "I think," said Hervey, "the hardest thing in religion is to deny sinful self." "Do you not think," returned the ploughman, "that the denial of righteous self is harder

still?" The words seemed to Hervey at the time to be folly, but reflection brought him to understand the meaning of them, and eventually, in the "renunciation of his own righteousness and acceptance of the righteousness of Christ," he found the peace which he had been seeking. He was ordained in 1736, and after occupying several curacies he became, on the death of his father in 1752, rector of his native parish.

His weak voice and delicate health did not permit him to be a popular preacher. He compared himself to a soldier wounded, bleeding and disabled, and only not slain. "My preaching," he used to say, "is not like sending an arrow from a bow, for which some strength of arm is necessary, but like pulling the trigger of a gun ready charged, which the feeblest finger can do." The influence which he could not exert with his voice, he tried to exert with his pen. He was, according to Dr. Hamilton, "almost the first evangelical writer who studied the graces of composition." The floridity of his style no doubt contributed largely to the circulation of his writings in his own day, although even then the oracles of taste condemned them. Now it prevents them from being read at all. The style is rhetorical and exuberant in the highest degree. "I cannot help thinking," said Dr. Blair in his *Lectures on Rhetoric*, "that it reflects more honour on the religious turn and good dispositions of the present age than on the public taste, that Mr. Hervey's *Meditations* have had so great a currency. The pious and benevolent heart which is always displayed in them, and the lively fancy which on some occasions appears, justly merited applause; but the perpetual glitter of expression, the swoln imagery and strained description which abound in them, are ornaments of a false kind. I would therefore advise students of rhetoric to imitate Mr. Hervey's piety rather than his

style; and in all compositions of a serious kind to turn their attention, as Mr. Pope says, 'from sounds to things, from fancy to the heart.'" "Not more laudable," said Southey, "in its purport than vicious in its style, and therefore one of the most popular that ever was written." The gaudiness of the style provoked the criticism even of Whitefield. "Nothing," he wrote, "but your scenery can screen you."

Hervey's object was, in his own words, "to dress the good old truths of the Reformation in such drapery of language as to allure people of all conditions." His chief writings were *Meditations and Contemplations:* vol. i. containing *Meditations among the Tombs; Reflections in a Flower Garden*, and *A Descant on Creation:* vol. ii. containing *Contemplations on the Night and Starry Heavens*, and *A Winter Piece;* and *Theron and Aspasia: a Series of Dialogues and Letters upon the most Important and Interesting Subjects.* Whatever may be said about Hervey's style, Dr. Blair was right in recommending his "piety" for imitation. He was a man singularly pure, sincere, and lovable. The large sums which he received for his writings were entirely expended on religious and charitable purposes. His popularity never spoilt him. It was in no mock humility that he called himself "the weakest of ministers and the weakest of Christians." He held his opinions strongly, and engaged in controversy in defence of them, but he indulged in no uncharitable denunciations of his opponents, and was free from theological hatred. His death was in accordance with his life. When anxiously asked by those around him not to speak too much lest he should exhaust himself, he replied, "I have but a few minutes to live. Let me spend them in adoring our great Redeemer."

IV. Another writer who was deeply influenced by the friendship of Newton, and who in his turn became a

power in the Evangelical Revival, was Thomas Scott. The son of a grazier in Lincolnshire, he followed for a time his father's occupation; but he had little taste for agricultural pursuits, and devoted his spare time to study. He was ordained a Deacon of the Church of England in 1772, when he was twenty-six years old. He became a clergyman because of the intellectual interest which the profession afforded. He had no spiritual zeal; he did not believe the doctrines which he promised to teach, and he had no adequate conception of the duties which he undertook to fulfil. "My views," he confesses, "as far as I can ascertain them, were these three: a desire of a less laborious and more comfortable way of procuring a livelihood than otherwise I had the prospect of; the expectation of more leisure to employ in reading, of which I was inordinately fond; and a proud conceit of my abilities, with a vainglorious imagination that I should some time distinguish and advance myself in the literary world." His subsequent conduct was "suitable to these motives." He devoted himself with extraordinary assiduity to "the study of the learned languages, and such other subjects," as he considered needful for promotion. "I spared no pains, I shunned as much as I well could all acquaintance and diversions, and retrenched from my usual hours of sleep, that I might keep more closely to this business. As a minister, I attended just enough to the public duties of my station to support a decent character, which I deemed subservient to my main design; and from the same principle I aimed at morality in my outward deportment, and affected seriousness in my conversation."

The influence and example of his neighbour, the Curate of Olney, John Newton, wrought a marvellous transformation. Scott at first regarded Newton with disdain, and challenged him to a written discussion of

the points on which they differed, expecting to "have the honour of rescuing a well-meaning person from his enthusiastical delusions." But Scott was speedily undeceived. The result of the correspondence was that by slow degrees and with great reluctance he became a convert to the "fanaticism," the "Methodism," the "Calvinism" which he had despised and derided. But more than by any book, he was influenced by the strong personality of Newton. Henceforth Scott threw himself into the labours of the pastoral office with unremitting zeal. Having filled in succession several curacies in Buckinghamshire, he was appointed to a Chapel in Grosvenor Place, where he remained seventeen years. Finally he returned in 1803 to Buckinghamshire as Rector of Aston Sandford, and died there in 1821.

The main literary work which, in the midst of his parochial labours, he managed to achieve, was his Commentary, *The Holy Bible: with Explanatory Notes, Practical Observations, and Copious Marginal References.* The Commentary is entirely uncritical, and devoid of literary skill; nor does it possess the quaintness of the kindred work of Matthew Henry, with which for a time it ranked in popular estimation. It was an attempt, in the most literal sense, to interpret Scripture by Scripture. Nothing was aimed at but the spiritual edification of the reader. "If," as Sir James Stephen says, "there is not in those six volumes a solitary sentence which could be quoted as an example of pathetic, fervid, or felicitous composition, it is equally true that they might be searched in vain for a sentence put together for effect, or merely interstitial and unmeaning." The circulation of the Commentary, which appeared in weekly parts, was immense, but Scott received scarcely any pecuniary benefit. The sale of his writings produced a sum of nearly £200,000, but he never obtained from them more than £47, and he became

involved through them in a debt of £1200. He was delivered from these entanglements by the generosity of friends, and enabled to end his days in comparative comfort.

His most interesting work is his Autobiography, which he calls the *Force of Truth*, a record of the changes which came over his opinions and his character. This work is remarkable not for its literary grace, but for its unmistakable tone of absolute sincerity. Though we cannot venture, with Bishop Wilson of Calcutta, to place it beside the *Confessions* of St. Augustine, we may cordially assent to the verdict of Sir James Stephen, "that the book is a luminous and dispassionate portraiture of a series of mental phenomena of rare occurrence, of deep interest, and of such a character that no man could have been the subject of them without the severest integrity, nor the delineator of them without singular perspicacity and force of mind." The power of the book has been felt by those who are far from adopting its theological conclusions. The author of a yet more famous religious autobiography acknowledges his profound obligations to the Autobiography of Thomas Scott. "The writer who made a deeper impression on my mind than any other," declares John Henry Newman, "and to whom, humanly speaking, I almost owe my soul—Thomas Scott of Aston Sandford. I so admired and delighted in his writings that, when I was an undergraduate, I thought of making a visit to his parsonage in order to see a man whom I so deeply revered. I hardly think I could have given up the idea of this expedition even after I had taken my degree; for the news of his death in 1821 came upon me as a disappointment as well as a sorrow. I hung upon the lips of Daniel Wilson, afterwards Bishop of Calcutta, as in two sermons at St. John's Chapel he gave the history of Scott's life and death. I had been possessed

of his *Force of Truth* and *Essays* from a boy; his 'Commentary' I bought when I was an undergraduate. What I suppose will strike any reader of Scott's history and writings is his bold unworldliness and vigorous independence of mind. He followed truth wherever it led him, beginning with Unitarianism and ending in a zealous faith in the Holy Trinity. It was he who first planted deep in my mind that fundamental truth of religion. . . . Besides his unworldliness, what I also admired in Scott was his resolute opposition to Antinomianism, and the minutely practical character of his writings. They show him to be a true Englishman, and I deeply felt his influence, and for years I used almost as proverbs what I considered to be the scope and issue of his doctrine: 'Holiness rather than peace,' and 'Growth the only evidence of life.'"

Thus, strange as it may seem, the *Force of Truth* prepared the way for the *Apologia pro Vita Sua*.

THE END

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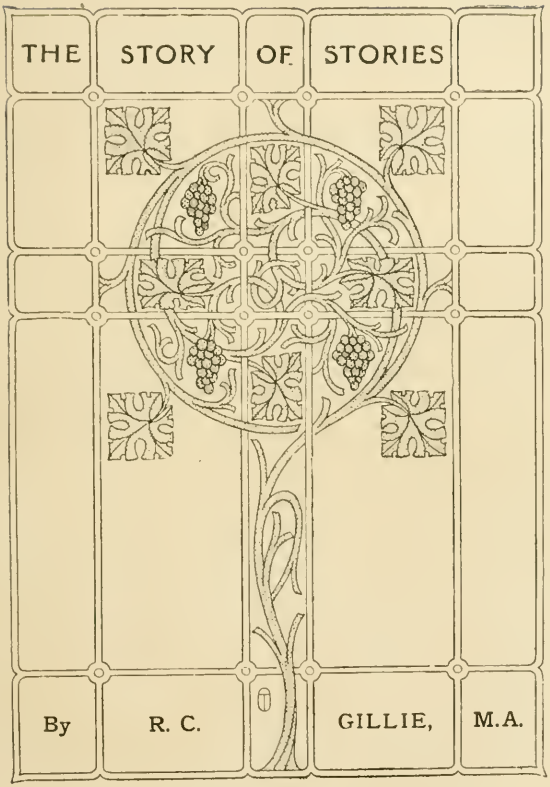

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